MARCO GRIFFI,

THE ITALIAN PATRIOT.

BY MRS. WEBB,

AUTHOR OF

"NAOMI," "MARTYRS OF CARTHAGE," "IDALINE," ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

"READ this, Ellen," said Mr. Aubrey to his wife, as he handed her a letter which he had perused hastily and with some emotion. "I fear my poor brother is at length really sinking; and he earnestly desires to see us all once more before his death. Are you equal to the journey? for I do not think the case admits of much delay."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Aubrey; and a flush suffused her pale face, and tears rose to her eyes, as she looked sadly at her own mourning garb. "I must go and see Edwin again; and I feel just now that 'better is the house of mourning than the house of feasting.' But it will be very sad to go to Altringham, the place which was to have been our dear Edmund's future home, and to know that his eyes will never again look on the glorious views around it, and his cheerful voice

will never again echo through its halls. And he loved that place so dearly!"

"He did so, Ellen; but we have a good hope that he has gone to look on far brighter scenes, and that his voice is now united to those of the heavenly choir above in singing the song of the redeemed. We must not grieve that he has exchanged an earthly inheritance, however fair, for one that is eternal in the heavens."

"You are right, Charles," replied Mrs. Aubrey, and a smile of calm resignation and peace again shone on her countenance. "But I wish your brother had a son of his own to succeed to Altringham, or that Janet could have inherited the property. It will never add to our Reginald's happiness to become the possessor of that large estate. He is more than contented to live in this sweet place, and to look on it as his future home. And he is too entirely devoted to his sacred profession ever to wish for the responsibility of such a position as the proprietor of Altringham must necessarily occupy. Would to God that your poor brother Marcus were living, to enjoy his own inheritance!"

"Dear Ellen, we must not indulge too much in such wishes. All is undoubtedly *well*, as God has ordained it; and if Reginald lives to become master of Altringham as well as Wareham, I have no doubt that he will have strength given to him to do the duties of his station in life. I believe his present delicacy arises

entirely from his having over-worked both mind and body since his ordination. His zeal in his sacred profession rather oversteps the bounds of discretion, but this is far better than being lukewarm; and we must arrange some plan to give him a few months of perfect rest and change."

Mr. Aubrey paused for some time, as if in deep thought, while his wife again read over the letter that had brought the account of her brother-in-law's declining state. It was written by himself, but in such an almost illegible manner, as clearly to indicate a state of excessive weakness; while, at the same time, the earnestness of the brief sentences showed how strongly his heart still yearned towards his brother and his family, and how much he feared that he might never again behold them.

"Charles," said Mrs. Aubrey, "the more I consider this letter, the more I feel the necessity for our losing no time in preparing for the journey to Altringham. We must start by the afternoon train, and we shall arrive there by nine o'clock, at which time they evidently hope to see us. But what are you considering so earnestly, my dear? We must act now, and not give any time to meditation."

"I was thinking of those words of yours, Ellen,—'Would to God that our brother Marcus were living!' You know how long it was before I could bring myself to give up all hope of his return; but it is now nearly

seven-and-twenty years since he left his home and his family in that strange manner; and I can hardly believe that his irritated feelings could have endured so long, and kept him an outcast from his native land. Surely, if our father's harsh treatment cut off all hope of a reconciliation with him, he might have obtained intelligence of his death, and have returned to claim this property of Wareham, as the second son's birthright; and he might have trusted to the love of his brothers to remove all difficulties out of his way, and to place him again in an honourable position. Poor Marcus! I would he had confided all his affairs to me; for though my father and Edwin believed him guilty of far more than youthful indiscretions and extravagances, I never doubted his honour. Full well I knew that it was a high and honourable feeling which made him brave his father's anger, and firmly refuse to marry our cousin Beatrice, whose large fortune would have made him an independent and even a wealthy man. But he never loved her, and never gave her cause to believe he did, though his father never could be persuaded that her too evident attachment to him had not been the consequence of his attentions. Beatrice was always a self-willed, impetuous girl; she believed what she wished; and when her hopes were disappointed, she showed her determined character by becoming a nun, in opposition to the wish even of her Catholic mother and connexions; and since her parents' death, she has made over all her

property to the convent. Marcus did well to refuse to unite himself to a woman so unsuited to him; but I fear that her being of a different religion to himself did not weigh much with him—would to God it had! I often tremble to think what may have been his fate since that fatal day when he so rashly threw up his commission in the Guards, and fled we know not how or where, leaving nothing but debt and sorrow behind him. Neither my father nor Edwin would ever discharge those debts. I believe Edwin would have done so, if his wife had not persuaded him to do otherwise. But Sarah could never comprehend the joy of doing a generous act. When, however, it pleases God to make me the possessor of all that should have belonged to Marcus, I will lose no time in redeeming his memory from shame, and satisfying every claim upon him. Possibly, Ellen, I may be only acting as his agent; possibly my own dearly loved and lamented brother may yet be discovered; and oh, how thankfully and joyfully should I then resign to him the elder brother's place, and live and die at Wareham! But, as you justly observe, we must waste no more time in such wild speculations. Go, my dear, and bid the girls be ready to accompany us in two hours. I will make arrangements with Reginald for our absence from home, which may be longer than poor Edwin seems to anticipate. He has so long been a sufferer, that I fear he may yet linger on for weeks. May the Lord bless his

sufferings to the eternal good of his soul; and may Sarah's heart be softened at length by the sight of his patient endurance to the end! How dear Janet will bear the loss of her father, I dread to think. She has nursed him for years, and been to him what his wife could never be—a gentle, cheerful companion, and a judicious Christian friend. She has had much to bear from her mother; but the Lord will reward her patience and forbearance."

CHAPTER II.

The last rays of an autumn twilight were fading from the grey towers of Altringham, as Mr. and Mrs. Charles Aubrey, with their son and two daughters, entered the old iron gates that opened into the park, in the carriages which had been sent to meet them at the neighbouring railway station, in the hope of their arriving by the latest train. They passed the somewhat dilapidated lodge, kindly returning the salutation of the old woman who kept the gate, and who appeared with her apron to her eyes, as a sign of her becoming grief at the passing away of the ruling dynasty. But the tone of her voice did not well accord with this demonstration of sadness, and expressed quite as much pleasure at the sight of the new comers, as sorrow for the cause of their arrival. Latterly the young people had seldom visited the Hall, and it was rumoured among the servants and dependents that their aunt did not encourage their doing so. But before their uncle became infirm, and subject to the control of his wife, they used, at his wish, to spend much time at Altringham, where they were beloved, not only by him and his only daughter,

Janet, but also by all the neighbours, both rich and poor.

While the old coach, and the more modern but yet faded pony-carriage, are slowly proceeding up the winding and grass-grown drive that leads to the Hall, we will take a rapid glance at their inmates, and also use our privilege of looking into their hearts and discerning the feelings that kept them all nearly silent, until they drew up at the porch.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Aubrey and their eldest daughter, Ethel, occupied the inside of the coach, and the thoughts of all three were sadly fixed on the events that had occurred since either of the ladies had visited Altringham Hall. As we have already observed, the mistress of the fine old place did not make them as welcome as their near relationship, and the affection which her husband entertained for his brother and all his family, ought to have ensured; and, therefore, the visits of her sister-in-law and nieces were few and far between. They could not brook her cold, ungenial manner, which had become much more offensive since her husband's declining health had prevented him from taking his own position in the household, and paying to his relatives the attention and kindness which it had ever been his pleasure to show towards them. Mrs. Aubrey knew that the family place must, at her husband's death, become the property of his brother, and to this inevitable event she could never reconcile her

mind. She was jealous of Charles Aubrey and his family, and irritated because her only child was a daughter, who could not inherit the old hall and extensive estates. In order, in some way, to indemnify herself and her daughter for this misfortune, she made it the object of her life to accumulate money, so that she might be well provided against the evil day when she must leave Altringham, and lose a position of which she was unduly proud, but which she had never adorned and had never consecrated to the service of God or the benefit and happiness of her fellow-creatures. She grudged everything that was spent in the improvement of the property; and, since Mr. Aubrey's long illness and infirmity had prevented him from superintending the management of his estate, and seeing that everything was kept in perfect repair, she had contrived to put a stop to all such expenses,—to get rid of the steward, and to cut down all the fine old timber that was so situated as never to come under the observation of her husband during his short daily drives. For many months even those drives had been given up; and for the same period the pleasure-grounds and the approach had been totally neglected; while the funds that should have been expended on their embellishment, were hoarded up by the selfish mistress of the place for her own private purposes.

Of all this unworthy conduct Charles Aubrey was fully aware, for he had never ceased to visit his poor

brother during his protracted illness; but he was too generous and too anxious for the comfort of the invalid to make him acquainted with the real state of the case. With all her faults, Mrs. Aubrey had continued to preserve her husband's affection, and her own influence over him; and it seemed uncharitable to open his eyes to that which would have embittered his latter days.

During the life of his eldest son, Charles Aubrey had felt it a much greater trial to see the estate, which he hoped would one day be Edmund's inheritance, thus neglected and injured; but since the gallant young soldier had fallen in the desolating Crimean war, his interest in the place had become greatly lessened, and he more than ever regretted the loss of his elder brother Marcus, whose presence would now have relieved him from what he regarded only as an additional burden and responsibility. This feeling was fully shared by Reginald, who had chosen the clerical profession with a sincere desire and intention of fulfilling its sacred duties, and had resolved never to leave Wareham and his parishioners there, even if Altringham should become his own.

Many and somewhat troubled were therefore the thoughts which occupied Charles Aubrey's mind, as he looked from the window of the carriage, and watched the startled deer springing up from their attitudes of repose, and retreating beneath the shade of the magnificent trees that still graced the park.

The fading light of evening fell on the pale countenance of Mrs. Aubrey, and tears gathered in her eyes, and slowly ran down her cheeks; for she thought of Edmund, who had accompanied her on her last visit to the Hall, nearly a year before, when he went to take leave of his uncle previous to sailing with his regiment to the East. From the fatal plains before Sebastopol he never returned; and since the sad news of his death had reached Wareham, six months ago, his mother's health had much declined, and all her efforts had been unavailing to recall her former cheerfulness. The blow had fallen heavily on all the family, for Edmund was to all an object of love and pride; but, next to his parents, no one felt his loss so deeply as Ethel, who was his favourite sister, and whose disposition, in many points, greatly resembled his own. She was serious and thoughtful, and to a certain degree self-willed. She formed her opinions decidedly, though not always on good grounds; and it was not easy to induce her to change them. She had built up a future for herself, in which Edmund held a prominent position; and it was a hard task for her to give up her anticipations, or to resign herself to the decrees of Providence. It was not that she rebelled against the hand of God, or that she did not seek for resignation to His will; but she sought it rather in a round of observances than in the sacrifice of a willing spirit; and therefore her feelings were very different to those of her father and mother, who had bowed

meekly under the afflictive stroke, and, in the midst of all their grief, had been enabled to say with sincerity, "It is well."

Catherine, the younger sister, who now sat by Reginald in the pony-phaeton, was of a character widely differing from that of Ethel, to whom, nevertheless, she was devotedly attached. She was much more lively than her sister, and of a more quick and excitable temperament: and very warm in her affections, and enthusiastic in all her tastes. Ideality was a powerful component in her disposition, and she almost worshipped the good and the beautiful in every form and every imagination in which goodness or beauty could dwell. She was naturally rather shy and reserved; and yet the quickness of her feelings and perceptions often betrayed her into sudden expressions, and even actions, which she afterwards regretted, and which gave to strangers a false idea of her own self-estimation. Reginald almost idolized her; and while watching her changing expressive countenance, and her active graceful form, and listening to her animated, and oftentimes wild and speculative conversation, he sometimes fancied that no other woman could ever be to him the friend, the companion, and the object of deep interest that his young sister Kate had become.

She entered with all her heart into his plans and efforts for the good of his poor people at Wareham; and also led him on to far higher and more spiritual

feelings than he had entertained at the time of his ordination; though then, and long before, he had resolved on devoting himself, and all his brilliant talents, to the service of his Maker. But Kate had the power of throwing a charm over every subject, whether grave or gay, that she took in hand: her imagination was unbounded; and she delighted to indulge it in lofty and glorious aspirations, in visions of future knowledge and future bliss, that drew forth the sympathy and roused the devotion of Reginald, but were little understood, and less approved of, by the more matter-of-fact Ethel.

In person, the sisters differed as much as in their mental qualities; Ethel being very tall, with a commanding figure, dark hair and eyes, and a brilliant complexion; while Kate was of a middle height, slight and graceful, with sunny hair, and deep blue eyes, shaded with long dark eyelashes, and a fair complexion, the clearness of which betrayed every emotion of her sensitive soul, as her colour came and went like the passing clouds before a summer's breeze. Neither of the sisters were beautiful; but both were attractive; and their simple unaffected manners and cultivated minds never failed to confirm the agreeable impression made by their appearance.

The thoughts of Reginald and his sister were running in the same course as those of their parents and Ethel, though tinctured in each by their own individual feel-

ings. But sadness pervaded every mind—sadness, rather for the loss they had sustained, than for that which now awaited them; for the death of the elder Mr. Aubrey could only be regarded as a mercy by those who loved him best; while that of Edmund had left a blank in every heart, and an aching void in those of his parents which nothing but time and true Christian resignation could fill, and to which nothing but a well-grounded belief that he was himself prepared for his great and sudden change could have reconciled them. His memory was greatly associated with Altringham, for during his grandfather's life he had spent much of his vacation time there; and since his uncle had succeeded to the property, and Janet remained his only child, Edwin Aubrey had looked on Edmund as his heir, and had delighted to make the Hall his home whenever he could be spared from Wareham. In this feeling his wife had entirely participated; and, though she never showed much cordiality towards the rest of her husband's relatives, Edmund was always sure of a hearty welcome. Possibly in this she was actuated by some other motive than compliance with her husband's wishes;—possibly she contemplated a still closer union between the two families, and desired that Janet might occupy a position by marriage to which her birth gave her no claim. And possibly, also, she might, since Edmund's death, have felt that Reginald had risen greatly in her estimation, and had become as

amiable and agreeable as she had always considered his elder brother to be. Had Reginald been devoid of all those personal and mental qualities which he actually possessed, Mrs. Aubrey would have undergone exactly the same change in regard to her present opinion of him; and would have been equally ready to receive him with all that warmth of manner which had formerly been lavished on Edmund alone. Poor Sarah Aubrey! she was a wretched slave to the desire for wealth and power, and no sacrifice of time or trouble, or even of sincerity, was too great, if she hoped they would aid her in the attainment of the darling object of her life. Therefore, the letter in which her husband announced to his brother his own conviction that his days on earth were numbered, was accompanied by a few lines from herself, containing an urgent entreaty that all the family would hasten to Altringham without an hour's delay, and an especial request that her excellent nephew would not suffer any other duty to detain him, as his uncle so greatly desired his presence; and she added, that she "felt convinced that no one could minister to his comfort so effectually as the devoted young clergyman." It would have been well if she had arrived at this conviction some years ago; but it was only since she had fancied Janet's sorrow for the loss of her eldest cousin had subsided, and her own hopes had suggested that the affection entertained for him by her daughter might be transferred to his brother, that she had attempted

to overcome her prejudice against Reginald's religious views and practices, or to admit the possibility that he could be as useful and judicious an attendant at her husband's couch as the cold and formal vicar, Mr. Sloper, to whom she had persuaded Mr. Aubrey to give the living of Altringham.

CHAPTER III.

THE meeting between Mrs. Aubrey and her relatives was a melancholy one; but she was a "strong-minded" woman, and her love for her dying husband, though sincere, was not very absorbing; and was so much mixed with other feelings and other pressing interests that she was soon enabled to recover her composure, and enter into all the details of the sufferer's condition, which sufficiently proved that his time on earth would be short, and that it was needful his affairs should be settled for time and for eternity.

As far as this world was concerned, Charles knew that his brother had left nothing to be completed on his death-bed. He had made an ample provision for his wife and child; but having entire confidence in the judgment of the former, he had, contrary to the advice of Charles, left his daughter much more dependent upon her mother than he would have done if he had been more aware of her real character. With regard to his spiritual concerns Charles was less satisfied. For some years Mr. Aubrey had been what might be considered a serious man; and he had endeavoured to fulfil

all the duties of his station to the utmost, so long as his health had permitted him to manage his own affairs. But he had placed too much confidence in these outward acts, as recommendations to the favour of God; and the teaching of Mr. Sloper had tended only too powerfully to strengthen him in this erroneous feeling. He had looked more to the letter than to the spirit;—and had yet to learn that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Therefore, when death drew near, and the eyes of his mind were more opened, he felt the utter worthlessness of all his outward performances, and he desired to obtain an inward peace, which no retrospect of some well-spent years of his life, and no conferences with either his wife or Mr. Sloper, could bestow. His happiest hours were those when he was alone with Janet: for she did not bid him take comfort in the review of his own virtues, neither did she recommend, as the Vicar did, liberal donations to the Church and to charitable institutions, as if such tardy acts could atone for past neglect; but she read to him the Word of Life, and she prayed that her beloved father might have grace to receive its pure and sanctifying doctrines; and that, casting away all false dependences and vain hopes, he might be led to trust only in the redemption wrought out for him, and freely offered in the Gospel.

Her efforts and her prayers had not been without effect; and when Charles Aubrey approached his bro-

ther's bedside, and pressed his eagerly extended hand, he saw an expression on his wasted countenance that at once convinced him the way of peace had been found at length.

We will not repeat all the conversations which took place between the brothers, or tell how the earnest and evangelical prayers of the young minister brought joy and peace to the soul of the dying man. It is enough to say, that as death drew nearer, and "the outward man decayed, the inward man was renewed day by day." But this happy result was not accomplished without opposition and difficulty; for Mr. Sloper, though not zealous himself, was extremely tenacious on the subject of any interference with his spiritual office, and he did not consider that the near relationship of the parties gave either Reginald or his father any right to minister to the comfort of his parishioner in things pertaining to his soul;—and on this point, as on most others, Mrs. Aubrey perfectly coincided with him. He therefore made himself extremely disagreeable to the new comers, by perpetually endeavouring to thwart their efforts, and to infuse fresh doubts and fears into the mind of Mr. Aubrey; and yet, all the while, his manners were so bland and gentlemanly, and his appearance so unassuming, that it was impossible to show any open resentment towards him.

Mr. Aubrey respected him, for he believed him to be sincere, and he had not formed any very high esti-

mate of the responsibilities of a parish minister, or of all that he might accomplish for the good of the people committed to his charge. But he had never liked him, and had never confided to him his own inward feelings; nor did he at all approve of the influence which he exercised over Mrs. Aubrey. On all subjects, both worldly and spiritual, Mr. Sloper assumed the office of a dictator towards his patroness, especially on the subject of her gifts to the poor, and he would have done the same towards her daughter, if Janet would have suffered his interference. But she had no mind to submit her conscience or her actions to his control; and she often had to endure her mother's displeasure on account of the coldness with which she replied to his exhortations and his queries, and the little encouragement she gave him in his efforts to become her spiritual director.

Great was therefore the relief that she experienced when her uncle, and aunt, and cousins arrived, and were established in the house. Her affection for every member of her father's family was very great, and the memory of Edmund made them now still dearer to her; for he had been as a brother, and more than a brother, to her from childhood, and his departure for the Crimea had been the first great sorrow of her young life. Before she had recovered her accustomed spirits after that event, the news of his death had arrived, and then Janet knew that Edmund had held

a place in her heart that could never be filled again; and she also became aware, from letters which were sent home, that he had only awaited his return to England ere he declared his own attachment to his fair young cousin.

Janet was of a very calm temperament, and no one on earth knew the depth of her sorrow. It is true, her naturally pale cheek grew paler, and the light of her blue eyes was clouded; but she never remitted her efforts to promote the happiness of her parents, and of all around her; and when her father's health declined more and more, she became his constant companion and nurse, and she never let him feel that her thoughts were wandering far away to her young soldier's grave at Balaklava. So long as her father lived to require and bless her care, she felt that she could still be happy; but she sometimes dreaded the time when he should have gone to his rest, and she would be left to the sole companionship of her mother, who, though she loved her, was often harsh and unsympathizing, and appeared to think that, by amassing an ample fortune for her child, she had done all in her power to secure her future happiness.

She little knew Janet's disposition when she deemed that wealth would make her happy, or when she hoped that the cousin who now stood in Edmund's place as heir to Altringham might possibly also occupy his place in her daughter's heart. It was a pity that her

calculating spirit led her to entertain such a scheme, for it led to much disappointment and irritation.

As Edmund's favourite sister, Janet had always felt disposed to cultivate a greater intimacy with Ethel than with Catherine; but, in spite of this inclination, she found herself, on more intimate acquaintance, irresistibly drawn towards her younger cousin, whose open manner and affectionate but unobtrusive sympathy won their way to her heart, and drew from her a full confession of all her feelings and all her sorrows,—both the sorrows which were past and those which appeared to be in store for her. Great was the comfort which she derived from this unwonted confidence, and from the encouraging conversation of the earnest and energetic Kate, who felt with her and for her, and who strove to infuse into her gentle cousin some of the strength and endurance that belonged to her own character.

Janet had never been of a strong constitution, and deep sorrow, which she had sought to conceal and to conquer, had preyed on her health; and her close attendance on her father, combined with other sources of annoyance, had conspired to prevent her spirits from rallying; so that now, when another heavy trial came upon her, she felt the need of a stronger mind than her own on which she could rest, and in which she could confide: and this she found in Kate.

In religious feelings the cousins entirely agreed,

though they greatly differed on many other subjects. But the faith of both was derived from the pure Word of God, irrespective of any human teaching; and the rule of life by which each desired to guide her daily life was comprised in that touching appeal of the Creator to his creatures: "My son, give *Me* thine heart." And because Janet did thus endeavour to feel and act in dependence on Divine help, she was happy: —yes, happy even in the hours of trial and affliction, which had latterly so changed her outward appearance, but could not shake the inward peace of her soul.

Ethel did not altogether share the peaceful confidence that her sister and cousin usually enjoyed. She was of a more anxious and doubting disposition, and more inclined to look to her own performances and her own attainments as a ground of hope, and to the opinions of her fellow-creatures as a ground of faith; therefore she was less happy than they were; and if anything could have roused dissension and dispute between the sisters, she would have quarrelled with Kate, and with Janet also, for what she considered to be their too great independence of spirit in religion.

Meanwhile, the days passed on, and Mr. Aubrey, who had rallied a little after the arrival of his relatives, sank again more rapidly than before. But the work of life was done, though the chief part of it had only been accomplished upon a dying bed; and none could regret that his wasted and suffering form should sink

to rest, and the soul which had passed through so much conflict, and now so earnestly desired to know the truth, should be removed from this world of ignorance and error, to enjoy the full blaze of light and knowledge in the presence of God! He departed in peace, with his family around him; and ere long all that remained of Edwin Aubrey was deposited in the family vault in Altringham Church. Our concern is now with those who were called to possess those worldly goods which he could not take away with him, and which he had learnt to estimate at their true value.

It was necessary that the new master of Altringham Hall should prolong his stay there for a considerable time, although he had no intention of making it his permanent residence, at least for some years. But much business of a complicated nature had to be transacted; and he was desirous to look into the condition of those who had now become his dependents, and who had, for several years, been much neglected. The task, also, of liquidating every debt which his unfortunate brother Marcus had left behind him, and which he had willingly imposed on himself, gave him much trouble: but he never rested until every just claim was discharged, and every stain on his brother's character was entirely wiped away. And in this task he was cheerfully assisted by Reginald whenever his duties at Wareham would allow of his joining the rest

of his family at Altringham. But though Mr. Aubrey continued to reside at the Hall, he would not hear of the widow and daughter of his deceased brother leaving their home until the coming spring; and very gladly did Mrs. Aubrey avail herself of his kindness; not merely because it would have been painful to her to change her residence more speedily, but because she felt it would be more to her interest to remain; and she wished to take advantage of her brother-in-law's well-known liberality of spirit to the utmost of her power. All the kindness and sympathy which she received from him and his wife could not remove the unjust prejudice she felt against those who were her husband's lawful heirs; but her secret schemes with regard to Reginald and Janet, and her anxiety to secure to herself every article of property to which she could, or could not, show any claim, induced her to conceal her feelings, and to behave with more outward courtesy than she had been accustomed to do of late years. Truly she was an unloveable woman: and Janet's gentle affectionate heart was often wounded by her coldness; and the feelings which she naturally entertained towards her mother, and which she strove to cherish in spite of every discouragement, were often very painfully checked; and she could not help contrasting that mother's manner and conduct with those of her aunt, whose children all looked up to her with the love and reverence that ought to be a mother's

privilege and a mother's pride. Not that Ellen Aubrey ever sought, or ever desired, to occupy that place in the family which properly belonged to her husband. She yielded the *headship* with a womanly grace: but she felt that if a father is properly to be considered the *head* of a family, surely the mother may be regarded as the *heart*. Every pulse that beats in that centre of feeling and vitality must be felt in the remotest members; and every circumstance which affects those members, whether for good or for evil, is felt again by the *heart*. The head directs; it reasons and judges. The heart guides by its own impulses; it feels and acts.

Thus it was with the Aubreys; and they were a happy and united family. Janet felt the soothing influence of their society; and notwithstanding her deep sorrow and sincere regret for the loss of her beloved father, her spirit was cheered and lightened of half its burden while her relatives dwelt at Altringham. Even her mother seemed softened by her affliction, and by the presence of those who sincerely sympathized in that affliction, and whose whole demeanour and conversation showed that they enjoyed a peace which no earthly circumstances could destroy.

Among other good effects that resulted from the lengthened residence of the Charles Aubreys was the new interest which their example awakened in the breast of Janet for the welfare of her poor neighbours. Hitherto, any inclination which she had shown to look

into their individual wants had been entirely checked by her mother, who greatly objected to her holding any personal intercourse with such "low people," and only permitted her to attend the school occasionally, in compliance with the wish, we should rather say the *direction*, of Mr. Sloper. He did not himself approve of much domiciliary visiting, and did not practise it; for he held that it was not the duty of the parish minister to seek out the lost sheep of his flock and strive to bring them into the fold, but merely to give them the privilege of joining in the services of the Church, which were duly and regularly performed, and to carry the consolation of her prayers and exhortations to such as specially requested his attendance.

This had not been the practice of Reginald Aubrey during the three years that he had ministered among the people of Wareham; and his cheerful countenance and kind encouraging voice were as well known in every cottage in the parish as they were in the picturesque old church in which he preached to them the pure gospel of salvation. He was known and loved by all; and the good effect of his weekly visitations were visible in the improved life of his parishioners, and their more constant attention to all their religious duties.

In his endeavours for the good of those committed to his care he was liberally encouraged by his parents, and actively assisted by his young sisters, more espe-

cially Catherine, who delighted to accompany him in his rambles, whether on foot or on horseback, and to become acquainted with every case of want or sickness in order that she might immediately relieve it; and as the parish was small, though very scattered, and labour was well paid, this was comparatively an easy task. The poor-law had little to do with the people of Wareham; but it was not so with their less happy fellow-creatures at Altringham. There the population was numerous, wages unusually low; the so-called *guardians* of the poor generally selfish and illiberal; and, worst of all, the chairman of the board was Sir Hugh Duncombe, a hard and inaccessible man, whose character was chiefly marked by a total want of the excellent gift of sympathy.

Sir Hugh had succeeded a spendthrift father; and, as is frequently the case, he had adopted a course diametrically opposite to that of his predecessor, and had carried his otherwise laudable desire to redeem his wasted property to a very unamiable extreme. He would long ago have married, if he could have obtained the hand of a wealthy heiress; but hitherto his efforts in that way had been unsuccessful, and at the age of thirty-nine, with a handsome person and a fine but encumbered estate, Sir Hugh Duncombe was still a bachelor. He was a gentlemanly man; and his business-like habits, and rather intelligent mind, had made him a favourite with the elder Mr. Aubrey, at

whose request he had consented to be named his joint executor with his brother Charles.

If report spoke truly, the baronet felt a lively interest in the will of his friend, and would have been glad to have perused its contents during Mr. Aubrey's lifetime; for it was supposed that though Janet would not succeed to the estate, she would yet receive such a fortune from her father as would render her a rich prize to the man who might win her for his bride; and to this belief was attributed by the calumnious world a great portion of the interest which Sir Hugh showed towards Mrs. Aubrey and her daughter during the last long illness of the proprietor of Altringham. He was not a man to commit himself in any way; but he acted the part of a zealous and judicious friend, and waited until a more certain knowledge of circumstances should determine his future course of action, which his self-esteem led him to believe would bring about any result he might desire.

We have said that the late Mr. Aubrey had reposed an undue confidence in his wife, and had left his daughter almost entirely dependent upon her, never doubting that she would act in accordance with his known wishes. At the reading of his will this ill-judged proceeding of course became known; and if the feelings of the rest of the auditors had permitted them to notice the countenance of Sir Hugh, they might

have been struck by the expression of blank dismay which took possession of it when he heard that nearly all his friend's large funded property was bequeathed to his widow, and placed at her own disposal. And when a sufficient time had elapsed after Mr. Aubrey's death to allow of so old and disinterested a friend renewing his intercourse with the mourning family, it might have been observed by any one of quick perceptions in such matters, that the handsome baronet was much more sedulous in his attentions to the mother than he was to the daughter, and that he seemed to consider the weeds of widowhood extremely becoming to the still fair and comely face of Mrs. Aubrey.

But enough of these details respecting our *dramatis personæ*. Let them now speak and act for themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

Christmas was past, with all its joyful and all its sorrowful associations; and Reginald had gone again to Altringham, looking more worn and pale than ever, though still quite confident that the labours of his parish had nothing to do with his indisposition. In this opinion his parents did not agree, and they became more anxious to put an end to his lonely life at Wareham, and also to induce him to take such a period of entire rest as might, they hoped, thoroughly restore his health. For this purpose, and also for the sake of a pleasant change for his wife and daughters, Mr. Aubrey proposed that they should all go abroad for some months, as soon as he could make such an arrangement of his affairs as would permit him to leave England,—a proposal which was received with great satisfaction by all the party, though Reginald declared that it would be impossible for him to absent himself from his parish until after Easter, as he must place an efficient curate there, and see that everything was properly arranged, before he sought for amusement, or even health, by a foreign tour.

called "Janet's room." The sun shone brightly in at the large window that opened to the ground, and gave a lovely view of Janet's flower-garden, and across the picturesque but neglected pleasure-grounds, terminating in several ranges of wooded hills. Kate's favourite seat was in this window; and she was never weary of watching the varying effect of light and shade on the distant hills, which seemed to change their form with every passing cloud. The whole landscape was now covered with a glittering sheet of newly-fallen snow, which clothed the trees as with a heavy white foliage, and tempted Kate to make a sketch of some graceful birches that swept the lawn.

Suddenly she looked up from her occupation, as her cousin left the piano, and came to sit beside her.

"Janet," she exclaimed, "I have made up my mind that I wish I had been born to be a man!"

"Why, dear Kate?" replied her cousin; "why should you wish to be anything but what you are?"

"Because if I were a man, I could not only employ my energies in something more ennobling than sketching a birch-tree covered with snow, but I could also do—at least try to do—what is much more on my mind at this moment—resist oppression, and relieve those who are oppressed. Janet, I sometimes wish that I could either blind my eyes to the injustice and the suffering that so abound in this world of ours, or else that I could harden my heart and feel it less, when I cannot prevent it."

"And what has roused you to this burst of indignation?" said Janet, smiling at her cousin's eagerness. "What act of injustice have you either endured or witnessed, that has excited your feelings so much at this moment?"

"Oh, I never suffer from injustice in my own person, Janet! Every one is good and kind and indulgent to me. But I met with a case of distress when I was out alone yesterday, and I have been waiting to tell you of it, and to engage your help and sympathy towards relieving it. I would not interrupt your singing: it helped to calm my feelings, which you know are apt to be slightly irritated by anything which seems like trampling on the weak."

"Well, Katie, my singing does not appear to have succeeded in making you very calm. Pray tell me what you saw and heard, and if my purse can be of use to you, it is at your disposal."

"Thanks, my gentle cousin; you shall share with me the pleasure of doing what money may do for the objects of my pity: but you must also share the trouble of investigating the case, and endeavouring to interest those in authority. Let us go at once and see the poor creatures in their own cottage. The snow is not deep and the sun shines cheerily. I wonder whether it cheers the hearts of the sad and the suffering, as it does mine. Come, Janet."

And Kate hastily put away her clever but unfinished

sketch of the birch-trees, and drew her cousin away to prepare for their walk.

They soon sallied forth in the sensible and picturesque costume that, in these latter days, has helped so much to make ladies independent of weather, and even of mud, and proceeded at a brisk pace over the snow, their conversation keeping pace with their light and active steps; while a large black Newfoundland dog bounded away before them.

"Now, Janet," said Kate, as they ran down the flight of steps that led from the hall-door to the carriage-drive across the park—"now listen to my tale, and tell me if it is not a tale of woe! It came to pass, yesterday afternoon, that Ethel and I walked to the village; and when she returned home by the straight road, I chose to expend my superfluous energies, as well as those of Viking, in a longer walk, and I went round by Duncombe Lodge. You know I am a very fast walker, and on the road I overtook a tall, slight youth, very miserably clad, and evidently as miserably fed, who was carrying something tied up in an old handkerchief. He touched his hat as I passed him, and as I returned his salutation, and looked into his face, there was an expression that interested me, and induced me to inquire his name, and where he was going. My companion, Viking, who you know has the faculty of discerning characters even more quickly than I do, showed no displeasure at my making the boy's

acquaintance; so I was sure it was all right. Well, he told me his name was Herbert Goodwin, that his father worked for Mr. Davies, who holds one of Sir Hugh's farms, and that he had seven brothers and sisters, the youngest only a few days old. On further inquiries, I ascertained that the poor lad was going home to see his mother and his unknown little sister, and that the bundle contained some scraps of food, which he had saved from his own meals, and was carrying to his brothers and sisters, who, he said, wanted it more than he did. Poor fellow! by his own wan looks and sunken eyes, one could easily perceive that it was only by great self-denial he was enabled thus to add to the comforts of his home."

"How sad!" replied Janet; "but I will take care that the generous boy has no further need to starve himself in order to relieve his family. After you are gone, Katie, these poor people shall be my pensioners."

"Yes, Janet, I am sure of all that; but that is not enough. It is more than sad—it is disgraceful, that such want should exist in this Christian land. I have not told you half the misery of the case. Will you believe it? that boy told me—and I am certain he told the truth—that Farmer Davies only gives his father eight shillings a-week, and some cider, to maintain his wife and all that large family; and out of that pittance he stops two shillings every week for the

rent of the cottage. It makes me indignant to think of it!"

In this strain the girls continued to converse until they reached the cottage, the situation of which Kate had ascertained from Herbert the previous evening; and their feelings being somewhat excited, they were prepared to appreciate the picture that met their eyes as, after knocking at the door, they entered the crowded little kitchen.

By the side of a very small fire sat the mother of the family, looking pale and weak, and quite unequal to the struggle of daily life to which she had already returned. On her knee lay a puny infant, whose wailing cries she was endeavouring to hush, while at the same time she was attending to the wants of five or six children, who were crowding round a small table, on which stood a bowl of potatoes, half a loaf of coarse bread, and a plate containing the morsels of cold bacon and cheese which Herbert had brought home the previous day. He was not there; for before sunrise he had set off to the farm where he was fed and kept in return for all the work that could be accomplished by a weak, growing lad; and from whence he weekly came home, a distance of six miles, to bring what he had stinted himself to gather together.

The entrance of the young ladies seemed to surprise the poor woman; but she rose quietly, with the infant

in her arms, and placed chairs for the visitors. The children were almost all standing at their meal. Then, at Kate's request, she sat down, and waited to know the cause of the unwonted honour.

In a very gentle and sympathizing manner, which could not wound the feelings of the mother of the family and the *mistress of the house*—a consideration which is sometimes forgotten by those who visit the poor in their own houses—the cousins drew from Mrs. Goodwin all that they desired to know of her circumstances, and which fully confirmed all that Herbert had said. At the mention of her boy, the mother's eyes glistened; and when Kate and Janet expressed their warm admiration of his conduct, the tears fairly ran down her pale cheeks, and dropped on the now sleeping face of the infant, as she bent over it, to hide her proud emotion.

"Oh, ma'am!" she presently exclaimed, "that boy is a blessing to us indeed. Before he went to service, he was like another mother to the little ones. When he came from school, he taught them what he learnt himself, but they never learnt one bad word from him; and every Sunday, and many a week-day evening too, he read his Bible to us, which neither his father nor I were ever taught to do. And now that he lives with Farmer Hobson, he runs home when he can on a Sunday evening, and back again before daylight on Monday —to see us, and to read to us, and to help us as far as he

can. His master is a hard man, but he lets him off when all the work is done."

"And what wages does he give your son?" asked Janet.

"He gave him his meat and drink and lodging last year, Miss; but he has promised him a pound this year, and that will get him some clothing."

"And is it possible that you and your husband, and all these children, live on six shillings a-week? for that, by what your son said, is all that remains after the rent is kept back."

"Why, no, Ma'am, not exactly; for when I am able, I go out to work, and sometimes I keep the bigger children from school, and they get a few pence by driving away birds, and such like. But I am sorry to do it, for I know what it is to have had no schooling, and I am very thankful to those who provide it so cheap for them."

"But how is it," inquired Kate, "that the wages are so low here? It is not so in our country."

"And it was not so here, Ma'am, till lately. My husband always got nine shillings a-week till this winter; but now the bread is cheaper, and God be thanked for it; and Herbert's master, Mr. Hobson, lowered his men's wages, and then he never rested till he had persuaded Mr. Davies to do the same. Our master is not a cruel man; he would not have done it if he had not been over-persuaded. It does come

hard upon us now; and all this winter I have not been able to work; but when the spring comes on it will be better. Indeed, my husband could get something more now by working in after hours, but then Mr. Davies would hear of it, and he would expect him to work longer for him, and he would not give him any more wages."

This last declaration concerning the man who was "not a cruel master," was too much for Kate; and she began to express her opinion more freely than was judicious under the circumstances. But Janet checked her; and, giving the poor woman such a sum of money as would secure her from want for many days, and the sight of which again drew tears from her eyes, she hurried her cousin from the cottage.

"Janet!" exclaimed Kate, as soon as the door was closed, and they were out of hearing, "these cases of want and oppression seem to weigh me down. It is bad enough at Wareham during the winter, even when everything is done that Papa and Reginald can think of to relieve the poor. But here, where Mr. Sloper attends to nothing but the school, and going about among the higher classes of his parishioners, and Sir Hugh does worse than nothing, I fear there must be many families as wretched as the Goodwins."

"I fear there may be," replied Janet, with a burning cheek and a downcast look; "and I feel how much I have been to blame for not having endeavoured to

do my duty more zealously among them. My father, at least would not have checked me; but I did not know there was such misery so near us."

"Well, Janet, now you do know it, I am sure you will do all you can. But that will not excuse those who are the cause of such distress; and I do confess I am astonished at the patience with which the poor endure all their privations, while they see those above them rolling in luxury, and wasting what would be a maintenance for many. I do not think I could bear it as they often do. That poor Mrs. Goodwin never made one complaint, even though they are so hardly used. But oh, Janet, here come Sir Hugh and Mr. Sloper. I will tell them of the Goodwins, and ask them to call at the cottage. They must pass the very door."

"You would not disturb them now, Katie, would you?" said Janet, timidly. "They seem very much occupied."

"I must speak now," replied Kate hastily, as the two gentlemen approached them in earnest conversation, and busily engaged in examining a paper which the Vicar held extended before Sir Hugh.

They would have passed with a brief salutation; for Sir Hugh no longer sought as formerly every opportunity of joining Miss Aubrey, and trying to make himself agreeable to her,—in which, by the way, he never succeeded; and Mr. Sloper had a sort of dread

of her plain-spoken and rather impetuous cousin. But Kate would not be so easily diverted from her object; and, forgetting her natural shyness in the excitement of the moment, she stopped, and said,—

"I want to speak to you for a moment, Mr. Sloper. We have just been to the Goodwins' cottage, and found them in great distress. Do you know how very poor they are?"

"I am not aware," replied the well-dressed Vicar, with a polite bow, "that they are in greater poverty than the rest of the labouring population. Some of the children attend my school, and are exceedingly well-behaved and attentive. The eldest boy, who has gone to service, used to be the head of the school, Indeed, Miss Catherine, I think you must be mistaken in supposing there is any distress in that family."

"If you go to the house, Mr. Sloper, you will see that I am not mistaken. They are as poor as they are deserving," replied Kate, rather shortly.

"Indeed I will do myself the pleasure of looking in on them some day; but I am now going with Sir Hugh to arrange about the site of the new school, for which I have at last got the plans. Will you and your cousin do us the favour of accompanying us to the spot, and giving us the benefit of your taste and judgment? I know you are an artist yourself, Miss Catherine, and I shall be proud if you approve of my plans."

Kate bit her lip: but she would not be baffled; and therefore she took Janet's arm and turned to accompany the gentlemen. But she soon looked up from the drawings, which were highly-ornamented façades and plans for a very expensive building; and she again recurred to the subject which was uppermost in her mind.

"Excuse me, Mr. Sloper," she began, "but it seems to me that, if a new school-room is necessary, it would be better to build a plainer one, and let all the money that is going to be expended in ornament go towards improving the condition of the poor."

"You surprise me," answered the vicar; "I thought your good taste would have led you to approve of my desire to erect a handsome and picturesque building in the parish of Altringham."

"I admire picturesque buildings extremely; and I highly approve of every effort that is made to educate the children of the poor. But I want to see them fed and clothed also. I want them to receive proper wages, and not be forced to spend their strength in working at the rate of less than *twopence an hour!* How can those children of the Goodwins ever grow up to be healthy men and women on the miserable food they get? And the eldest boy is starving himself to help the rest, and enduring great hardship that he may not lose his place, and become a burden to his parents."

"But do you not know, Miss Catherine," observed Sir Hugh, with a courteous smile, "that, if Goodwin finds he cannot support his family, the workhouse is open to him?"

"The workhouse!" exclaimed Kate, turning on the baronet a look almost of contempt. "Yes, I know that the whole of that poor family may be driven to the so-called *work*-house, and exist there in idleness, when they are willing to work. I know that parents and children, husband and wife, may be separated,—that those 'whom God hath joined together,' man may 'put asunder'!—and all because these short-sighted, illiberal employers will not give such wages as would enable an honest industrious man to support his wife and children. Surely, Mr. Sloper," and she turned her glistening eyes on the Vicar, "surely God never meant His creatures to starve when they are able and ready to labour. Oh, how often I think of that passage in St. James's Epistle, 'Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth;'—and I wonder whether the land-owners and the farmers of Altringham feel that it applies to them!"

Kate Aubrey paused; partly from want of breath,—for she had spoken rapidly and vehemently,—and partly because she suddenly became aware that the

warmth of her feelings had carried her rather too far. The two gentlemen looked astonished, and not very comfortable at the vigour of her language; and Janet had for some time been attempting in vain to stop her. Now she coloured deeply, and, in a hurried voice, she said,—

"I beg your pardon if I have spoken too warmly. Indeed, it is a subject on which I feel very much interested; and I wish to interest others if I can. Good morning. It is time for us to return home." And with a graceful and rather dignified bow, she left her auditors, without waiting for any reply, and drew away her cousin Janet, who was only too ready to see an end put to the conference.

Kate was slightly annoyed with herself, and yet she could not really regret that she had been led to speak out her opinions so freely. Her instinctive horror of all injustice and oppression was so great, that any instance of it always excited her indignation, and drew forth its lively expression; after which her breath seemed to come more freely, and she experienced a sense of relief. Such was the case now, as she walked quickly with her cousin over the beaten snow on the high road, and called to her favourite Viking to follow.

CHAPTER V.

As the two girls walked back towards Altringham, they continued to converse on what had so much interested them, and to lay plans for the future good of those who were placed by God within their sphere of action and usefulness; and they decided on consulting Reginald on the subject, as they knew that in him an active and zealous benevolence was governed by a sound discretion. Great was therefore their satisfaction at seeing him standing at the park-gate in cheerful conference with old Rebecca Fowler, the inhabitant of the lodge; and finding that he had been enabled to leave the solitude of Wareham, and come to spend a few days with his family.

The good old woman was always proud when any of the young people of the "honourable house," as she invariably designated the Aubrey family, called at her cottage. She had known them all from early childhood, and looked on them as partly belonging to herself. To Reginald she had transferred the peculiar feeling of reverential interest with which she used to regard his elder brother as heir to the "honourable squire;" and

it is likely that she, as well as her late mistress, looked forward to his eventually sharing his inheritance with her dear Miss Janet. Her only surviving child, Ruth, was born after she became a widow, and was now in her twentieth year, but all her other children had died in their infancy. Ruth had been brought up with her young mistress, and had become her personal attendant, and faithful, devoted servant; for she had imbibed her mother's feeling of attachment to the family, and her mother's good sense also; and was more like a servant of the "good old times," than those who are too commonly met with at present.

Rebecca Fowler had been housekeeper at the hall for many years before her marriage with the gardener, and after his death she again resumed her situation there, for Mrs. Aubrey knew her careful and thrifty habits, and was glad to place her at the head of her household. But great were the changes which had taken place in the manners and customs of domestics since Mrs. Fowler had first had the superintendence of the Altringham establishment; and her spirit was continually chafed by the folly and vanity that she saw around her. Even since age and infirmity had compelled her again to resign her post, and accept the easier, but less dignified and responsible, situation of gate-keeper, she could not cease to dilate on the degeneracy of the race of servants, and to compare the days of her youth with the abuses of modern times.

This was a favourite subject when she could get any of the rising generation of the Aubreys to listen to her, for she hoped by this means to put them on their guard, and open their eyes to the real state of things.

The approach of Janet and Kate evidently interrupted some story which the old lady was relating with much earnestness; but when their greetings with Reginald were over, he laughingly begged her to resume her narrative, and to allow his sister and cousin to share the amusement which it was affording him.

"Well, sir," said Rebecca, when they had entered her neat dwelling, "I think it is right that Miss Aubrey or my lady should know what is going on in the hall, and what a pass things have come to. Here are you and your honourable parents all going away to foreign parts, and my poor master's widow and daughter will be left to the mercy of those rantipole servants, with that cook, Mrs. Carter, for she is not fit to be called a housekeeper, at their head."

"And what has Mrs. Carter done to make you so angry?" asked Janet, smiling. "I thought she was a very respectable person, though certainly rather young for her situation. But she looks so nice and quiet, and has such civilized manners. What has she been doing?"

"Civilized manners! Why, yes, Miss Janet, she has that; a civilized dress too, I suppose, with her flowers and her flounces. I did not dress in that fashion when I was a cook,—no, nor a housekeeper either; but

times are sadly altered for the worse since then, as you will judge when I tell you about that pretty Mrs. Carter. What do you think of her having written a novel? Absolutely gone and written a novel!" And the good old woman lifted up her hands in righteous indignation, while all her audience burst into a laugh, quite as much at the expression of Rebecca's face, as at the awful fact which she had announced.

"Written a novel, has she?" said Kate. "And have you read it, Mrs. Fowler? Do tell me what it is all about."

"No, my dear," replied Rebecca, still looking very grave, and rather scandalized at the mirth of the young people. "No, I have not read it, and I would not waste my time in reading such trash. But Ruth, like a giddy young thing, got Carter to show it to her; and if it had not been such a melancholy sign of the immorality of the present days, I could have laughed too at the nonsense she told me was in it. Why, bless me, it was called 'Miranda,' or some such outlandish name; and the silly girl, for she is hardly a woman yet, went to try and get it printed by some bookseller at the next town. He had the sense to refuse, and she had the folly to tell her own disappointment, and show her fine novel to the ladies' maids; and pretty well they all laughed at her. Now I find she is comforting herself by embroidery, and leaves her premises down stairs all in disorder, while she sits up stairs at her

fine work, just as she used to do while she was writing about this *Miranda.* And Ruth says she cannot even spell! I am thankful that my girl has not been brought up to such ignorance and vanity!" And the old woman drew a long breath of mingled displeasure and gratification, as her mind dwelt with maternal pride on the contrast between her daughter and Mrs. Carter.

Janet assured her, as she had often done before, of her entire approbation of Ruth's conduct, and soothed her troubled spirit by promising that her mother should be made acquainted with Mrs. Carter's literary and ornamental pursuits; and then the young people left her, and proceeded through the park, much amused at all they had heard, and at old Rebecca's excited feelings on the subject.

But presently Kate began to feel uneasy, for she remembered how much more vehemently she had very recently allowed her own feelings to carry her away; and with her usual candour, and readiness to own herself in the wrong, she immediately gave Reginald a full account of the whole affair, and asked his opinion of her conduct. Her brother could not but own that she had, in the warmth of her feelings, been betrayed into rather too great impetuosity, and that it was a fault to which she was very subject, and ought to guard against more carefully; but he was exceedingly interested in the story of the Goodwins, and promised to exert

himself for their effectual relief, for he fully sympathized in all her feelings of profound hatred of the selfishness and injustice that are so visible to the eyes of all who "love their neighbour as themselves," and which must be so hateful in the sight of a God of perfect justice and perfect love.

It was wonderful how a little conversation with her brother always calmed down Kate's over-excitement on any subject. His was just the character to influence her; for with almost as much enthusiasm and fervency of feeling as her own, he combined a very sound judgment, and great self-control. By nature, he was as quick and impetuous as his sister; and it was only by a firm resolution, actuated by the grace of God, that he had been enabled to conquer what he felt to be inconsistent with his Christian profession, and especially so with his vocation as a minister of the Gospel. Indeed, Reginald had had much to struggle against, when he resolved to devote himself to his sacred calling; for his personal gifts, as well as his lively spirits and superior talents, had rendered all active pleasures and pursuits peculiarly agreeable to him, and he excelled in everything of the kind that he undertook. But when he had taken upon himself the charge of attending to the spiritual and temporal necessities of the parish of Wareham, he seemed to feel it no sacrifice to give up much in which he had once delighted; and it was very beautiful to see the handsome and high-spirited young

man going from house to house, listening cheerfully to every tale of difficulty or distress, and relieving it with the zeal of an apostle, and the gentle kindness of a woman. His life appeared to be always under the influence of the same law of benevolence that made John Newton say so quaintly, "I see in this world two heaps, of human happiness and misery. Now, if I can but take the smallest bit from one heap, and add it to the other, I carry a point. If, as I go home, a child has dropped a halfpenny, and if, by giving him another, I can wipe away his tears, I feel I have done something. I should be glad to do greater things, but I will not neglect this." No wonder, then, that Reginald was beloved and respected by all who came in any way within the sphere of his influence, and that all who were in trouble brought their difficulties to him.

We need not detail the particulars of all his exertions in behalf of Kate's new *protégés*, the Goodwins. Suffice it to say that his efforts were both earnest and effectual, and productive of nothing but good; for though he visited and remonstrated with both Farmer Davies, and his instigator, Farmer Hobson, and never let them rest until they raised their labourers' wages to their former very moderate level; and though he took occasion to speak to Sir Hugh Duncombe, and to Mr. Sloper, and to express his own opinions in an open and manly manner, yet it was all done in such a spirit of Christian courtesy, that not one individual felt irritated by his

interference. On the contrary, they all respected his firmness, and admired his active benevolence, though it must be owned they did not altogether set themselves to imitate it. It required a higher power than that of Reginald's example to change the hearts of any of those men.

Great was Kate's satisfaction, when he told her the result of his exertions; and especially when he informed her that he had persuaded Mr. Hobson to give up Herbert Goodwin to him, and that he proposed to take him to Wareham, and place him under the care and teaching of the old butler there; and that when he followed his parents and sisters to Italy in the spring, he hoped to take the lad with him. "We shall see then," he added, laughing, "whether the balmy Italian air will not restore health to his wasted limbs, and colour to his famished cheeks."

"I hope, at all events," said Ethel, who was sitting with her sister and cousin in the boudoir—always called "Janet's room,"—and assisting them in making frocks for the little Goodwins, "I hope, at all events, the Italian air will have that effect on you, Reginald; for you get thinner and paler every day; and now you really look quite exhausted. You have exerted yourself too much for these poor people."

"No, Ethel, not too much, as I have succeeded in my purpose; and I hope that others, besides the Goodwins, may be the better for what I have been able

to do for them. I had quite a battle to fight with Sir Hugh, and I believe I conquered him at last by the fear of all the family entering the workhouse—for Goodwin himself is hardly able to work at present. Then both the farmers opposed my views most decidedly at first; and had I not been the Squire's son, I should never have got the better of them. I cannot tell how I persuaded Mr. Sloper to enter into some of my plans. I suppose he saw that they were right. However, all is settled now; the cottage is to be repaired and enlarged, the wages to be raised, help to be given while necessary, and Herbert to be promoted to the rank of a page. Have you anything more that you wish me to do, Katie, before I go home to-morrow?"

"No, Reginald, thank you. You have cleared away all our difficulties; and I really believe you are sorry to have no more to contend with. Though you go about all your conflicts, as you call them, in such a quiet way, I am sure you have the organ of combativeness strongly developed, and take a positive delight in overcoming difficulties, whether in subduing some fault that you see in yourself,—and which no one else sees, by the way,—or in persuading obstinate old farmers, and perverse middle-aged gentlemen, to do justice to a pauper family!"

"Thank you, Katie," replied her brother, laughing at the earnestness with which she spoke. "I am afraid you think I have mistaken my profession, and that

I ought to have been a 'man of war.' But seriously, I believe you are right. I often find, from my own experience, the truth of that remark of your favourite author, Ruskin, that 'it has been made part of our moral nature that we should have a pleasure in encountering and conquering opposition, for the sake of the struggle and the victory; not for the sake of any after result: and not only our own victory, but the perception of that of another, is at all times a source of pure and ennobling pleasure.' You will agree with me in this feeling, I know, Kate, for you enjoy a struggle and a victory as much as I do."

"Most assuredly I do, my reverend and pacific brother; and so dearly do I love to have all my powers, such as they are, called forth to the utmost, that I often wonder how the propensity is to find exercise in another state of being, where there will be no oppression to resist, no errors to rectify, and no opposition to combat. I cannot believe that the pleasure one finds in victory—I would rather say, in success—can be a wrong feeling; and as I also believe that every right feeling will be continued in our immortal condition, I am frequently very much puzzled how to reconcile my own strong impressions and hopes, with the received notions of a future state of perfect happiness; where faith will be exchanged for sight, and hope for possession; and where we know of nothing for which we can strive, and labour, and put forth all our immortal energies."

"Dear Kate," said Ethel, with a grave and almost reproachful look at her sister's animated countenance, "how can you allow your fancy to lead you away into such wild and unauthorised speculations? Why not be satisfied with the knowledge that, if we attain to that state of blissfulness, we shall have nothing left to desire?"

"Because, Ethel, I cannot still the thoughts that come crowding into my mind; because I cannot repress the yearnings of my soul to know what shall be hereafter; and because I find these very fancies, which you call so wild, and think so much worse than useless, do help to raise my affections above this world, and enable me to look down upon all its cares, and all its interests, as from a higher point of view. Can I be wrong, then, in indulging them? Tell me, Reginald."

"I believe not, Katie," replied her brother; "so long as your thoughts and imaginings do not lead you away from your practical duties, or induce you to fancy yourself 'wise above what is written,' I believe they are very useful to you. Your restless, inquiring mind must be kept in exercise; and it is surely better for you to speculate, even wildly, on heavenly things, than to confine your researches to objects of lower interest. Some minds do not require such outbursts of fancy; but I consider them a sort of safety-valve to yours. However, 'there is a time for all things under the sun,'

and we must leave such pleasant communings for the present, and I will help you to carry all these things to the Goodwins. I must desire Herbert to join me here to-morrow, and go home with me to Wareham."

CHAPTER VI.

VERY sad was the parting between Janet and her cousins, when the time arrived for them to leave Altringham with their parents, and commence their proposed journey. The excitement of preparation, and the desire to be useful to those she so dearly loved, enabled her to support her spirits to the last; but when the carriages had driven from the door, and she had watched them moving rapidly along the road until the trees hid them from her view, she turned away with a heavy heart, and felt that she was *alone.* Yes, *alone;* for though her mother remained with her, she could not conceal it from herself that in her she had no companion. No two people could be more opposite in character and disposition than Mrs. Aubrey and her daughter; and though that circumstance may not always preclude strong affection, and even the happiest social intercourse, yet it did so in this case, for it was not softened by the influence of sympathy—they never *felt* alike.

The active, bustling, business-like manners of the mother grated harshly against the gentle, and somewhat indolent, temperament of the daughter; and the

innate generosity and perfect truthfulness, which were marked characteristics in the latter, could not but render the love of money and the habit of dissimulation, which were but too visible in the former, very distressing, and even repulsive.

Happily for Janet, Mrs. Aubrey was so fully occupied, from the moment of the departure of her brother-in-law and his family, in making innumerable alterations in the establishment, including the dismissal of the literary Mrs. Carter,—and arranging everything on an economical footing, that she left her daughter much to herself; and she was thus enabled to follow out the useful course of life to which her cousins had introduced her. In this she found an ever-increasing interest; and she even extended her rambles farther than was consistent with her strength. In all her walks she was accompanied by Ruth, her faithful and intelligent handmaid, who was to her a friend as well as a servant; and also by the noble dog Viking, which Kate had, almost with tears, left to her care.

Thus attended, she was happy, while she could roam at liberty over the magnificent park, or go far beyond its boundaries, on some errand of benevolence.

The spacious but ill-furnished rooms of Altringham Hall, where she had played as a child,—where she had dwelt with her beloved father,—and which had more recently been rendered cheerful by the presence of her cousins, were now desolate, and brought back nothing

but sad memories of the past; and it was only when Janet was breathing the pure fresh breezes of spring, and animated by the consciousness of being employed in the service of God, and for the good of her fellow-creatures, that the heavy weight which successive bereavements, and continual disappointment and mortification, had pressed down so heavily on her young heart, was in any measure lifted off. It was strange that a mother's eye did not detect the increasing paleness of an only daughter's cheek, when the flush of exercise had subsided; and the dimness that so often clouded those once brilliant eyes, when the sparkle of momentary excitement had faded away; and that a mother's heart did not feel that her only child was wretched though uncomplaining—wretched from the want of some one to sympathize with her in the feelings of her warm and gentle heart! But so it was—Mrs. Aubrey's attention was directed to other objects than her daughter, and other interests than those which occupied Janet's thoughts; and though Ruth saw with sorrow that her young mistress's health was declining, and though old Rebecca Fowler was loud in her lamentations over the altered appearance and depressed spirits of her "honoured young lady," and the departure of so many members of "the honourable house,"—to which, indeed, she inwardly attributed all the change that she so deeply deplored—yet she, who should first have perceived that change, was insensible to it.

This period of Janet's life was, as far as all outward circumstances were concerned, the most comfortless that she was ever called on to pass through; but it was a time of salutary discipline, to which she had never been accustomed during the life of her indulgent father, and it led her to a self-examination and self-knowledge, for which she had cause to bless the Great Disposer of all events. To this spiritual education we must now leave her, and follow the travellers through the varied scenes that charmed their fancy, and gratified their taste; and which exerted their wonted healing influence on the health and spirits of every individual of the party.

We need not enter into any detailed account of all the well-known circumstances attending a journey to Paris, nor speak of the many attractions of that gay city. Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey found it greatly altered and embellished since they had visited France many years ago, and they were almost as much gratified as their daughters, to whom everything was new and delightful. But among all the objects of beauty and interest that claimed their attention, none equalled, in their estimation, the noble gallery of the Louvre. Among the countless pictures that adorn it, they saw many that offended their pure and unconventional taste; but many, also, that they were never weary of re-visiting and gazing at in deep admiration, and which never passed from their memories, even when the

galleries of Italy had been seen, and their superiority duly appreciated.

The Aubreys did not linger long in Paris, for it was not gaiety they sought, and they were desirous of reaching Italy, and spending some time at Florence, before the heat of the summer should compel them to seek the fresher breezes of the Swiss mountains. They therefore proceeded rapidly, by Lyons, to Marseilles, only stopping to see the ancient and very curious cathedral of Avignon, and the elaborate tomb of Pope John the 22nd, who founded the splendid palace, which is now used as a barrack for the troops that guard the interesting old city. These soldiers, as they leaned half-dressed from the windows of the ruined palace, or lounged about the court-yards, smoking their perpetual cigars, appeared, to our travellers, to wear a gloomy and discontented air; and their manner, when accosted, was surly and forbidding: but it did not prevent the Aubreys from proceeding to the height just above the barracks, and gazing with admiration on the beautiful view which it commands. On one side they looked on the winding river, with its varied banks, and the rich country through which it flows, and the Hautes Alpes, on which the declining sun shed a rich red glow, bounding the horizon; and on the other lay the once flourishing old town, which now bears a most melancholy and desolate aspect, but is still attractive in a picturesque point of view, and furnished Kate's rapid pencil with

several characteristic subjects for her sketch-book. She was not a finished artist, but she drew with great taste and facility, and her quick eye, and lively imagination, found ample exercise for this talent wherever she was. Her travelling sketch-book was already enriched with many a quaint nun's or peasant's head-dress, and many an amusing traveller's costume and equipments, which she had met, either in the railway-carriages, or the river steamers, during her journey from Paris, and which afforded constant amusement to herself and her companions. Nothing new or original was lost on her, whether it were in the peculiar form of a peasant's *sabot*, or the architecture of a cathedral; and, as her mind was as inquisitive as her perceptions were quick, she was ever adding to her store of information, and filling what she called "her own mental picture-gallery."

The education of Ethel and Kate Aubrey had not been, what is called, a very regular one, that is, it had not been conducted according to the conventionalities of the present day, when it seems to be expected that every young individual should acquire every accomplishment, and be drilled in every science, under the sun. Mrs. Aubrey's judgment led her to adopt a very different course, and her daughters were spared the usual dull routine of long and weary lessons, which can never give a taste for knowledge, and is needless where it already exists; and they were taught to find a pleasure in acquiring general information, and in cultivat-

ing the special talents with which they were gifted. Of these, drawing and music were the chief; but the different dispositions of the sisters were shown in these tastes, as in everything else. Ethel was slow and persevering, and would spend much time and patience in making correct copies of really good subjects; while Kate exercised her talent in original sketches, which, however hasty, were always correct and artistic. Ethel, again, would practise untiringly, until she had mastered the most difficult and scientific pieces of the old composers; while Kate, who really loved music more enthusiastically than her sister, and was never weary of listening to her excellent performance, yet was more frequently found playing by ear any airs or passages that caught her fancy, or singing wild national melodies in a rich contralto voice, than steadily pursuing the course of exercises which was prescribed for her.

We do not say that Katie was right,—we only say that such was her character, and such her practices; and though her governess reproved and lamented her desultory proceedings, her father and mother could never be induced to send her to school to learn regularity and discipline; for they felt sure that her natural talents, and inquiring mind, would ensure her becoming an intelligent and well-informed woman. Probably they were right; at all events, the result proved favourable to their theory. But this is a digression to which we have been led in defence of our young

friend Kate Aubrey, and also in order that our readers may become better acquainted with the fondly-attached, but most extremely different sisters, whose life and adventures we are relating.

Marseilles was the next place at which they paused, but only for a few hours. The train from Avignon brought them there early in the day, by a line that runs through a great variety of scenery:—now passing by groves of olive trees and almonds, interspersed with vineyards; and then between lofty and picturesque rocks, until the carriages dashed through a long tunnel, and at length emerged into bright daylight, and a beautiful view of the Mediterranean, or rather of the mouth of the Rhone. The effect was very striking, and gave them a more favourable impression of this noted sea-port than was confirmed by a further acquaintance. The Neapolitan steamer, which was to convey them to Genoa, was not to leave the port until the evening; they had, therefore, ample time for making all necessary arrangements, and seeing all,—which is very little,—that Marseilles has to show of interest or beauty to strangers. At this busy port they were again struck with the disaffected air and uncivil deportment both of the officials and the populace, among whom they were surprised not to see the great sprinkling of military costumes that usually add so much to the lively effect, but give at the same time so painful an impression to the spectators, of a crowd on the Conti-

nent. But they were informed that, in this instance, the absence of the military element was owing to a report, which had arrived by telegraph, that another attempt had been made on the emperor's life; and, this time, it was said, with such effect, that he was not expected to survive. The troops could not be depended on to preserve the tranquillity of the town; and, therefore, they were confined to their barracks, and the gloomy looking populace were left to gather on the quays and public places, and to vent their ill-feeling in rudeness to the strangers of various nations, chiefly English and Americans, who were assembled there to take their passages in the vessels that crowded the harbour.

Very thankful were our travellers when they found themselves at length safely on board the *Ercolano*, which was bound for Genoa; and very favourably did they contrast the state of tranquillity and freedom in which they had left their own beloved country, and their loyal countrymen, with the discontent and evident thraldom that reigned among the lower orders at Marseilles, and probably at that time pervaded every class and every district of *la belle France*.

Gladly did they see its shores, which looked lovely and peaceful when viewed from a distance in the light of the warm setting sun, fade away from their view; and though the *maladie de mer* affected all the party more or less, they yet retired to their narrow berths in

the dark cabins with a very joyful hope that the next land they should behold would be the shores of Italy. A rough night, and the wild discordant cries of the French and Neapolitan crew, prevented their enjoying much repose; but when, at an early hour the following morning, they assembled on the narrow deck, all their fatigue and all their other calamities were forgotten. The beautiful Italian coast was in view; and they were never weary of admiring the bold precipitous rocks, crowned with deep green olive groves, and clothed with hanging vineyards, and the white towns and romantic looking villas that were scattered along the shore. And when the course of the vessel again took them out of sight of land, the beauty of the "blue Mediterranean," its depth of colour, its clear transparency, and the bright sparkles, like tongues of fire, that seemed darting up from its gently rippling surface, were sources of great enjoyment.

Occasionally Kate varied her occupation by sketching the figures of some of the passengers; but she always did so in such a manner as she believed would prevent any one from guessing her employment. Great was, therefore, her surprise—and, we must own, her amusement—when, as she had just put a finishing stroke to a capital portrait of a corpulent White Friar, clothed in a dirty serge dress, that had once been white, and that flowed down to the ground, nearly covering his quaint-looking shoe-buckles and short puffy feet, a voice

over her shoulder exclaimed, with a broad Irish accent, "And very well you have got him, Miss!" She looked up, and saw a grimy broad-shouldered engineer, walking hastily away to his work, with a very humorous expression of countenance, and she knew that one among that motley crew sympathised with her in her keen enjoyment of the ridiculous.

It was evening when the *Ercolano* entered the port of Genoa; and our travellers had to endure a long and tedious delay before all the custom-house and other officials would permit them to land; but their impatience was beguiled by the beauty of the twilight view, and they gazed with delight on the fine old castles and palaces that surround the harbour, and were distinctly visible against the clear blue sky. The bustle of landing was very new to English ideas, and the screams of the half-naked Italian boys as they struggled violently to secure some article of the travellers' baggage, would have inspired a belief that mischief must follow, if their laughing eyes and glittering white teeth had not belied their angry and vociferous tones. But all things—even the tedious landing from a Neapolitan steamer—must have an end; and ere darkness fell on the city, the Aubreys were comfortably established in the fine Hotel della Croce, whose sacred sign, painted high on the lofty façade of the building, had been visible to tantalize their weary eyes and hungry sensations all the while they had been detained in the port.

The *Ercolano*, being bound for Naples, only allowed her passengers twenty-four hours to rest at Genoa, and hurry through as many of its churches and palaces, both ancient and modern, as time would permit, and far more than memory could retain. But the Aubreys hoped again to visit the exquisite old city, and they therefore regretted the less their inability to do more than take a cursory view of the most striking objects of interest. The old Palazzo Doria, once the residence of the great Admiral, Andrea Doria, first claimed their attention; and its curious ceilings, old family portraits, and striking view of the harbour from the open balcony, whence the admiral used to view his fine fleet lying in safety, well repaid their pains. The Duomo, or Cathedral of San Lorenzo, was, owing to some recent grand ceremony, entirely covered, and disfigured, by hangings of crimson velvet and damask and gold lace. But this unbecoming display did not conceal the richly-painted ceilings; and the massy silver altars, and candlesticks, and pendant lamps, that adorn the various chapels, excited the wonder of Ethel and Kate, who were yet unaccustomed to the profuse magnificence that is lavished on some of the churches in Italy. Still more were their wonder and their admiration aroused when they were led by their intelligent *laquais-de-place* to the church of San Ambrozio, which may well be called a "marble temple," for the walls, the pillars, the altars, and the very floor, are entirely composed of rich mar-

bles of every variety of colour, and inlaid in the most graceful patterns;—and from thence to the Annunziata, which he considered the crowning sight of all, and which certainly seems to combine the beauty, the grandeur, and the wealth of both the others.

The painted and gilded ceilings surpassed anything that even Kate's imagination had conceived; and the twisted marble pillars, and altars inlaid with costly gems, showed that no expenditure had been spared by those who dedicated the gorgeous structure to the service of God. And yet the English travellers,—with perhaps the exception of Ethel, who regarded all this magnificence of architecture and adornment with some inward feelings of veneration,—left the building with an impression that it rather resembled a heathen temple than a church designed for simple Christian worship. It was refreshing to them to take a rapid drive through the charming *promenades* on the ramparts, and to eat ice in a small but most fascinating *restaurant*, all glowing with crimson, and gold, and mirrors, and opening into a garden of delicious orange-trees. The girls now realized that they were in Italy; and the costume of the women, with their long white veils thrown gracefully over their heads, and their large gay-coloured fans held up to screen their faces from the sun, quite confirmed the pleasant conviction.

The afternoon was devoted to the inspection of several of the public and private palaces, which are so

freely thrown open to strangers, and which contain such invaluable treasures of art and beauty. Among these none gave them so much gratification as the Palazzo Brignole Rosso, the outside of which is painted *red.* The pictures which adorn the walls of the richly-furnished apartments are of such a class as to delight the purest taste and to satisfy the most accomplished artist. Our travellers gazed long and earnestly at Guido's San Sebastian, Strozze's San Francesco, and many other *chefs-d'œuvre,* which they thought could not be surpassed, though their guide continued smilingly to assure them that he had something finer yet in store for them. At length he led them through a door that opened into a handsome room, and suddenly turning round, he pointed silently, but with a look of the most intense pride and admiration, to a large picture of "Christ paying the tribute-money," by Van Dyke.

There was no gainsaying the taste of the *laquais!* Go, all ye travellers who can do so, and judge for yourselves. And ye who are not so privileged, believe that there is a picture in that Palazzo Brignole Rosso, the sight of which would repay a pilgrimage to Genoa, if there were no other objects of interest in the glorious old city!

So apparently thought others besides the Aubreys; for near the end of the room stood a tall, distinguished-looking man, of foreign aspect, whose deep, earnest

eyes were so rivetted on the picture that he did not seem to notice the entrance of strangers; and it was only when they approached him, in order to view the painting from the best position, that his intelligent glance met theirs. Each party seemed to be involuntarily struck by something in the appearance of the other; and the emotion, in both cases, was one rather of attraction than repulsion. But as they were evidently entire strangers to one another, no further communication passed between them, and soon afterwards the Aubreys left the Palazzo.

Slowly, and with lingering eyes and hearts, they walked along the narrow and picturesque streets of Genoa, often pausing to gaze on some striking architectural effect, that looked like one of Prout's best pictures awakened to reality and life. The carved, projecting windows, high above their heads, with remains of fresco paintings on the blank walls between them,—the wide stony portals ornamented with pillars and arches, and opening into dim shady courts, from whence broad flights of—not over-clean—marble steps led to magnificent suites of apartments above,—and the massy walls, enclosing private gardens, over which hung branches of orange blossoms and wreaths of trailing vines, formed altogether a succession of pictures, every one of which Kate longed to transfer to her sketch-book. But time and steam-vessels will not wait for the lovers of the picturesque, and our party were

obliged to hasten on board the *Ercolano,* feeling that the day they had passed at Genoa would ever remain a bright spot on their memories.

The next morning brought them to Leghorn, where the troublesome and domineering manner of the grey-coated Austrian officials annoyed all the passengers on the steamer, and aroused a little indignation in the liberal spirited Kate, who could never patiently endure anything that looked like undue compulsion. There was, however, no help for it in this case; and "might being right," the Austrian *gens-d'armes* made themselves as disagreeable as they pleased before the travellers found themselves at liberty to proceed to Pisa by train. The remainder of that day was devoted to the fine cathedral, the curious far-famed leaning tower, and the deeply interesting *campo santo,* which is composed of earth brought from Jerusalem in the twelfth century, and is surrounded by a wide cloister filled with ancient and modern monuments, and paved with tombstones. This cloister opens on one side into the *campo* through beautiful gothic arches, and the wall on the other side is covered with antique frescos. The beauty, the antiquity, and the death-like stillness that reigned in this very remarkable place, left a very deep impression on the minds of our travellers, and they lingered in the almost sacred enclosure until the shades of evening warned them to return to their hotel, and the glittering fire-flies, darting around them, lent their little light to guide them on their way.

CHAPTER VII.

"*Firenze la bella!*" Oh, how just is that appellation! We are told that Milton once said, "that, if he were permitted once more to enjoy the blessing of sight for a moment, he would choose to open his eyes upon the view of Fiesole and the *Val d'Arno*." And truly the eye of man need hardly desire to look on any more lovely scene than that which the valley of the Arno affords. In point of architectural beauty, the city of Florence is perhaps a little disappointing to the traveller on first entering it. The irregular streets, paved with stones of every variety of shape and size, and the gloomy appearance of many of the buildings, prevent its having the picturesque effect that is so striking in Genoa. Like many other objects of beauty and attraction, this city is more beautiful and attractive to the eye when seen from a distance; but unlike many other beautiful objects, her internal charms prove, on acquaintance, to be even greater than those which are external, and they grow upon the observer and become more and more lovely the more intimately he becomes acquainted with them, because they speak

to the mind and the feelings as well as to the mere admiration of beauty. So at least it proved in the case of the Aubreys; and every day that they passed at Florence impressed them still more with a sense of the value of its treasures, and the advantage to be derived from a careful and intelligent examination of them.

As they intended to remain there for several weeks, they did not make a "toil of a pleasure," and hurry from one sight to another, as they had been obliged to do at Genoa; and they found that one of the curious old churches, or one public gallery or private collection, was quite sufficient to give them pleasant occupation for a day, and even to require several repeated visits in order duly to appreciate the works of art so lavishly crowded together.

Mr. Aubrey had visited Italy in his youth; and though many years had passed since that time, he well remembered those objects which his excellent taste had pointed out as most worthy of notice; and his well-informed mind rendered him a most instructive and entertaining *cicerone* to his wife and daughters, all of whom were eager for information, though not always equally interested in the same subjects. But we are not writing a guide-book to the beauties of Florence, and our business is rather with our travellers themselves, and the individuals whom they met and became acquainted with, than merely with the places and things which they beheld; and therefore we will proceed to

tell of the former, leaving the latter to appear incidentally according to circumstances.

One of the various objects which Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey had in view when they decided on visiting Italy, was to procure for their daughters the advantage of better masters than their constant residence in the country had afforded them in England. They therefore availed themselves of an introduction which they had obtained through a friend to Signor Bezzuoli, whose apartments were contiguous to the *Academia*, and who, being himself a painter of considerable experience and great repute, would probably be able to recommend a good master in his own noble art.

They entered his *studio*, which was separated from the ante-chamber by a wide flowing curtain of green velvet, and were received by him with the greatest courtesy. Pictures in various stages of progress covered the walls, and leant against every article of furniture; and the artist was busily engaged on a fine painting of great size, representing a very spirited cavalry engagement, in which the life-like expression of the horses especially attracted the attention of Kate and her father. Signor Bezzuoli laid aside his brush and wand, and respectfully doffing his black velvet painting-cap, which he again immediately resumed, he proceeded to listen to Mr. Aubrey's inquiries, and without hesitation recommended a young Venetian

friend of his, Signor Marco Griffi, whom he pronounced to be one of the most promising artists in Florence.

"His talents," he added, "are such as ought to place him above the necessity of giving lessons, and his noble birth and excellent education must, no doubt, often render the task an irksome one to his independent spirit. But fortune has been unkind to him: his father died a poor man at Venice, and his mother brought him to Florence, where she has some friends, and nearly expended the wreck of her property in procuring for her only son those advantages of education which were more suitable to his birth than to his prospects. Now her grateful and devoted son repays her care and love by labouring for her maintenance in a manner that his high feelings would otherwise have led him to despise. He is a gentleman, Signor; and as such I feel sure you will treat him," said the old man, as he lifted his keen, penetrating eyes, and looked anxiously from one of his visitors to the other, as if to ascertain from the expression of their countenances whether they would treat his young protegé with all the respect and consideration which he evidently considered his due. Apparently he was well satisfied, for he smiled benignly, with a special glance of approbation at Kate's bright and animated expression, and her marked admiration of his grand equestrian picture; while Mr. Aubrey replied,—

"You need not fear for your young friend, Signor

Bezzuoli. If, as you say, he is a gentleman, and of a cultivated mind, we shall consider his acquaintance as a privilege, especially after all you have told us of his domestic character, and his pecuniary troubles. We have all of us, also, too great a veneration and love for his glorious art, not to feel a respect for every one who excels in it."

Here the old painter again lifted his velvet cap from his head, and bowed with much grace and dignity to the whole party, as taking the compliment to himself.

"And besides all this," continued Mr. Aubrey, "Signor Griffi's society will be a great advantage to my daughters, and, indeed, to us all, in teaching us to converse with greater fluency in your beautiful and musical language." The cap was off again, and the graceful bow repeated. "We have all learnt it at home, but it is only in Italy that the difficulties of speaking it can be overcome."

The Signor had been conversing hitherto with his visitors in French; but he immediately took the hint, and proceeded in Italian to offer to conduct them to the galleries of the *Academia*, an offer which was gratefully accepted; and some hours were passed, both profitably and agreeably, in examining this noble school of painting, which contains numerous and excellent specimens of the art, of every age, and in every style. The company of Signor Bezzuoli was a great advantage;

for, being himself at the head of the painting department in the *Academia*, and a man of acknowledged taste, he was able to direct the attention of the strangers to those objects which were most worthy to engage it; though, in many instances, their own perceptions of merit caused them to forestall his remarks. Kate, especially, could not always restrain the eagerness of her curiosity within such bounds as to keep her by the Professor's side; and once she interrupted his rather lengthy comments on a quaint old picture of the Virgin and Child by Cimabue, by calling to Ethel from the other side of the gallery, and pointing towards a kneeling figure of Saint Francis, on which her eyes were intently rivetted. Ethel obeyed the call, and the rest of the party following her, they all shared in the admiration which the wonderful picture had excited in Kate.

"You are right," said the Professor; and he looked so reverently at the prostrate saint, that Kate expected to see the velvet cap raised again. "You are right, Signorina, to appreciate this painting so highly; though it would have been better to have come to it in its proper order. But love for the art must ever claim my sympathy and indulgence; and I am glad that your own good taste has directed you to this exquisite work of my favourite Cigoli."

"Cigoli," observed Mrs. Aubrey; "that name is new to me. He was, I presume, a countryman of yours,

Signor. Has he left many pictures; and are there any in Florence equal to this Saint Francis? The expression of deep repentance, and yet of lively hope, in those eyes, is the most extraordinary thing I ever beheld in painting."

"It is marvellous, Signora—it is almost divine!" exclaimed the Professor with enthusiasm. "I am proud to say that Cigoli was born in Tuscany, and exercised his high talent chiefly in Florence. He lived in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and died in middle age. Unhappily, he has not left many finished pictures to be the pride and glory of his nation; but there are some in Florence which you will surely see, and which surpass even this San Francesco. I need not describe them to the Signorina;" and he smiled blandly at Kate; "she will know them, and feel their merit."

Thus they passed through the galleries of the *Academia*, finishing with the great *Pietra-dura* establishment maintained there by the government. They then bade adieu to their intelligent companion, who promised to send Signor Griffi to their apartments the following day; and once more saluting the English party, and gracefully waving his velvet cap, the Professor returned to his *studio*, and to his beloved occupation.

The following morning, as the Aubreys were sitting in the comfortable apartments which they had engaged, and which commanded a pleasant view of the Arno, with its many bridges, and the varied bank beyond,

their courier announced Signor Griffi; and a strange sensation was felt by each member of the family party, when they looked up from their occupations, and saw the very individual who had attracted their attention in the Palazzo Brignole Rosso, at Genoa.

He coloured slightly as he entered, and a little embarrassment was visible in his air and manner, as if his present business were either new or distasteful to him. The kind reception which he met with soon, however, dispelled any painful feeling which might have existed in his mind, and he became perfectly at his ease. He had called to make arrangements for giving lessons to the Miss Aubreys, and not actually to commence his instructions; and so sensible and intelligent was his conversation, and so perfectly gentlemanly his whole deportment, that the Aubreys forgot his vocation as a drawing master, and only regarded him as a very pleasant visitor. He spoke French with perfect ease and fluency, and in that language, as being familiar to all parties, the conversation was carried on for the present, with an understanding that when he entered on his course of lessons, Italian should be the language employed. Possibly, in suggesting this, Mrs. Aubrey had other motives besides the improvement of her daughters in the musical tongue of Italy. Possibly she saw that the conversation of the Signor possessed a charm and an interest which was hardly desirable in his position; and she considered that by prohibiting the use of

French, and insisting on that of a language in which neither Ethel nor Kate had yet acquired the power of expressing themselves with facility, she should put a check on the intimacy that otherwise bid fair to be established between the master and his pupils. And so Signor Griffi took his leave, greatly pleased with his new English acquaintances, and having inspired them with an equally favourable impression.

No sooner was he gone, than Kate exclaimed, "Oh, Ethel, I know now why we were all so struck with Signor Griffi when we saw him in the Palazzo Brignole at Genoa! He is, at times, the very image of that beautiful picture of Uncle Marcus that hung in Janet's room at Altringham. I never admired any face so much as that, and I tried several times to make a sketch of it; but I never could succeed in catching the expression; and it is that peculiar expression that I observed in the Signor's eyes, when mamma asked him about his mother. But at other times he looked so different, and his dark beard and moustache gave him such a foreign appearance, that I quite forgot the likeness."

And Kate looked so animated, and the colour rose so brightly to her cheeks as she spoke, that Mrs. Aubrey rather regretted that Signor Bezzuoli had not recommended a drawing-master of more mature age, and who possessed less of that peculiar expression of countenance that Kate so greatly admired. But there was now

nothing to be done, and the anxious mother could only hope that no attractions in an Italian artist would prove dangerous to the peace of her child. She even thought her own maternal fears so really groundless, that she forbore to mention them to her husband, and consequently the lessons proceeded regularly and successfully, and the Signor was often invited by the unsuspicious Mr. Aubrey—fathers seldom think of such things—to accompany his party in their visits to the numerous and beautiful churches, and palaces, and public galleries, with which Florence is crowded.

Marco Griffi very seldom accepted these invitations, for he could not often afford the time for such indulgences; and Mrs. Aubrey remarked, with much satisfaction, that his manner became even more reserved towards her daughters than it had been at first, and that, when Mr. Aubrey was present, his conversation was almost entirely addressed to him, or, if he were absent during the drawing-lessons, to herself. It was wonderful to see how steady and persevering Kate became—Ethel had always been so—but the rather desultory younger sister seemed to be inspired with a new character, and she was never weary of copying the studies which Signor Griffi left with them, and never failed to receive his commendation with a glowing cheek and dancing eyes. But Kate always loved praise, and had always been capable of making great efforts, if not continuous ones, to obtain it; so there was nothing

either extraordinary or alarming in the fact that she showed a desire to please her drawing-master.

The gallery of the Uffizzi, and many others, both public and private, had been seen and duly admired by our party; and at length Mr. Aubrey announced that it was his intention that day to conduct them to the Pitti Palace, and there indulge them with a sight of what he considered the crowning glory of Florence. It was Ethel's great ambition to study in one of the galleries, and to attempt to copy some really valuable pictures; and as Signor Griffi thought that she would derive great improvement from doing so, he consented to accompany the Aubreys to the Pitti, in order to assist in the selection of some picture that would suit his pupil's abilities. Kate had no wish to try her skill in the same way, for her talent lay rather in bold sketches and water-coloured drawings; and she felt such a veneration for the works of the great masters, that it seemed to her as if any attempts of hers to copy their beauties would have been a sort of profanation.

Often did these beautiful lines recur to her memory, where she had laid them up many years before, when she little thought how vividly their spirit would be reflected in her own, in the galleries of Italy :—

"Beautiful art! my worship is for thee;—
The heart's entire devotion. When I look
Upon thy radiant wonders, every pulse
Is thrilled, as in the presence of Divinity!
Pictures! bright pictures! Oh, they are to me

A world for mind to revel in. I love
To give a history to every face; to think
As I thought with the painter. As I knew
What his high communing had been!"

And if in other galleries she found herself involuntarily repeating these lines, oh! how powerfully did she feel their force, when she found herself at the Pitti, passing in wordless admiration from one apartment to another of that noble suite, every picture in which seemed to her a gem, and in which none are to be found that can offend the purest taste, or the most ardent love of beauty!

If, as Ruskin says, "the greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind of the spectator the greatest number of great ideas, and he is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of great ideas:" then surely there are many pictures in the Pitti which must rank among the greatest on earth, and the painters whose works are treasured on its walls can never be surpassed.

Always impatient, even when in the greatest enjoyment, Kate had preceded the rest of the party, and had entered another saloon, adorned, like all the rest, with exquisite inlaid floors, and painted ceilings, and tables of precious marbles set with yet more precious gems, which in any other place would have attracted her earnest attention and admiration. But what were floors, and ceilings, and tables, in her eyes, compared

with the picture that now held her breathless and entranced before it?

Signor Griffi had followed her. He had forgotten his self-imposed office of guide to the party, and had left them discussing the merits of the collection in the room adjoining, and hastened on for the very purpose of noting the effect on Kate of the first view of Cigoli's most striking representation of "The Descent from the Cross."

However he may have wished her to feel its beauty, and estimate its excellence, he was more than satisfied; and he stood aside, gazing alternately at the rapt countenance and at the glorious picture that aroused in it such depth of feeling; and Marco Griffi felt that he had never, with all his knowledge and all his love of high art, appreciated that work of Cigoli's as the simple English girl did. He would not have disturbed her for worlds. He had seen his own countrywomen kneel in adoration, and cross themselves devoutly, before pictures of similar subjects; but he had never before seen that look of deep devotion, combined with heartfelt sympathy, that now dwelt on Kate Aubrey's expressive features, and filled her eyes with tears. Those eyes were still rivetted on the very touching figure of the Virgin, as she kneels at the foot of the cross, and looks down in mute agony and amazement on the bloody nails lying on the ground before her, when Mr. Aubrey came behind his daughter, and, after

looking at the picture for a few moments, repeated in a low voice those sad prophetic words of the aged Simeon, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."

Kate looked up in his face as if aroused from a dream, and smiled. But her father saw how deeply she was moved, and he turned her attention to the companion picture, the "*Ecce Homo*," which established the fame of Cigoli. As a painting, it is, no doubt, quite equal to the other, and worthy of all admiration; but no picture that Kate ever saw produced on her the effect which "The Descent from the Cross" had done; and again and again she returned to it from the other rooms, and tried to imprint all its details on her memory, so that no time should ever obliterate them.

Signor Griffi was her close attendant from one apartment to another; and his manner was so gentle and respectful that she found herself conversing with him more freely than she had ever done before, and earnestly expressing her opinions and feelings with regard to the treasures of art that surrounded them. The young painter could not but sympathise in her love of all that was beautiful either in form or expression, and her disgust towards everything that was either ugly or vulgar—none of which, however, offended her eyes in the noble gallery of the Pitti. But in some of her feelings he could not sympathise; for he was accustomed to look on the most sacred

subjects mainly with an artist's eye, and it was new to him to mark how painfully she was affected by some touching but unnatural pictures of the Redeemer, as a child, either sleeping on the ground, with a cross for his resting-place, or else suspended on one, in all the agonies of crucifixion. "Oh, it is revolting to all one's best feelings!" she exclaimed, as she turned from one of these too life-like representations. "I love to think of the child Jesus as a perfect pattern to all other children: but it was 'the *Man* of Sorrows' who bore my sins on the cross; and as a *man* alone can I bear to see Him thus depicted."

Marco Griffi was all unused to such a manner of realizing sacred subjects; perhaps he had looked on many of them as he did on the numerous representations of pretended miracles that abounded in the churches as well as the galleries of Italy. Certain it is that superstition was not a trait of Marco Griffi's character; and it would have been well if, in discarding that error, he had not almost renounced likewise the faith which it sometimes degrades.

But Marco did not despise the feelings which he did not share; and that day he returned to his home with other and better thoughts in his heart than those which generally reigned there.

CHAPTER VIII.

The drawing-lessons proceeded very successfully; sometimes in the Aubreys' private apartments, and sometimes in the Pitti gallery, where numbers of artists, of both sexes, may be seen continually studying and copying the exquisite specimens which it contains of all the best masters. During those lessons either Mrs. Aubrey or her husband were always present; and the more they saw of Signor Griffi the more they found to admire in his character, and to approve in his whole manner and deportment. The mother's watchful eye soon also detected that, though both Ethel and Kate appeared equally pleased with his agreeable conversation, yet that her youngest daughter seldom spoke of him in his absence; and the tell-tale blushes that sometimes rose to her cheek when his name was mentioned by others gave her a good deal of secret uneasiness. She wished more and more that the good old Professor had recommended a master more like himself; for his grey hairs, and velvet skull-cap, and dark flowing painting-robe, would have given her a feeling of confidence that she never enjoyed

while the young and handsome Marco Griffi was teaching the mysteries of colour to her daughters in her own apartment, or directing their taste in the elegant saloons at the Pitti. Still she had no excuse, and she could hardly bring herself seriously to entertain the wish, to discard the intelligent master under whose instructions both the girls were making such rapid progress in their favourite art.

Ethel had fixed on a "Holy Family" of Andrea del Sarto's, which she greatly admired; and day after day she spent hours in copying it, while Kate roamed from room to room, making clever outline sketches of the pictures which had most powerfully impressed her mind, and often pausing, even in the midst of this fascinating occupation, to fill a page in her very original sketch-book with the quaint and remarkable heads, and flowing hair and beards, of some of the artists of all nations, who were assembled in this grand school for painting.

Music-lessons also occupied much time: and no sooner were a harp and pianoforte established in the Aubreys' large saloon than it was discovered that Signor Griffi was almost as accomplished a musician as he was a painter, and that his fine voice blended most harmoniously with that of Kate, who immediately found a pleasure in practising Italian songs and Venetian canzonettas that she had never manifested in England. It might be something in the climate of Italy that

made this style of music so attractive! Certainly either the genial atmosphere or some other occult influence did wonders for Kate's vocal powers; and Mr. Aubrey continually remarked on the improvement, and requested Signor Griffi to join their party in the evenings, that he might have the pleasure of hearing his "little Kate" sing with him. Oh, short-sighted Mr. Aubrey!

Frequently the cool evening hours were devoted to visiting some of the fine old churches of Florence; and occasionally Signor Griffi was persuaded by the unsuspecting father of the family to be their companion and *cicerone*; for all parties agreed in preferring his remarks to the conventionalisms of the professional guides. He did not accept these invitations readily; and sometimes, after an apparent struggle, he would suddenly plead either business connected with his art, or his duty to his invalid mother as a reason for declining the proposed expedition, and would take a hurried leave of his English friends. On those occasions it might be observed that Kate's spirits were not so high as usual, and that, though she took a deep and thoughtful interest in all she saw, yet there was less of enjoyment on her countenance, and fewer brilliant remarks escaped her lips.

The cathedral and several other churches had been already examined, and duly admired for their architectural beauty, and the marvels of art and of wealth

of every kind that they contained. But many and various were the feelings that these visits excited in the different individuals of our party; and much did they see which aroused their displeasure, as well as gratified their curiosity and their taste. The open doors, always ready to admit the humblest worshippers, struck them greatly; and though Ethel and Kate differed on many other points connected with the Italian churches and the Italian religion, they agreed in wishing that the same liberty could be enjoyed in England, and with the same result. The deep awe and silent attention,—often undisturbed by the approach of strangers,—that were visible in those who were engaged in their private devotions, spoke much in favour of this foreign custom, and made a strong impression on Ethel, whose sympathies were always drawn forth by such outward demonstrations of piety. But she could not sympathise with those whom she saw kneeling at the confessionals and whispering their most secret thoughts and feelings to the priest within, and who, in some cases, was as visible to the passer-by as the penitent himself! She did not express her indignation with quite so much vehemence as her sister did, but she felt and acknowledged that this was certainly a custom "more honoured in the breach than the observance."

The Church of Santa Maria Novella had been reserved as one of the last to be examined, because Mr.

Aubrey knew it to be one of the most interesting in Florence, and so beautiful, that Michael Angelo is said to have called it his *Sposa.*

Signor Griffi had at length found a leisure evening to accompany the party; and Kate's bright eyes showed that she anticipated much pleasure in examining the celebrated frescoes and paintings with which this ancient edifice is richly decorated. Nor was she disappointed; for the frescoes are considered, as a whole, the finest paintings of the kind in Florence. They passed from one chapel to another, finding in each much to admire and much to wonder at, from the exquisite pictures, and valuable plate and gems, to the waxen figures, tawdry artificial flowers, and strings of silver hearts, that had been the offerings of the faithful at some favourite shrine. They saw many of the Dominican monks, to whom this church and the large convent attached to it belong, moving noiselessly about, and marked the bows and crossings which they performed before every altar that they passed; and then it was that Kate first observed that Signor Griffi never crossed himself, and remembered that she had never seen him take holy water on entering a church, or bow his knee before any shrine.

From the body of the church they entered the sacristy, which is lined with fine polished wood, and enriched with gilding and marble and paintings in the most profuse style. But Kate could not admire them

with tranquillity; for, as she entered, she beheld an open confessional, occupied by a white-robed priest, whose head was leaning against the grating on one side; while, only separated from him by this partition, and equally exposed to the view of all who entered the sacristy, knelt a woman in the act of confession, who seemed entirely absorbed in the task she was performing. Her face was concealed by a thick veil, but her air and figure denoted her to be young, and belonging to the upper class of society.

Involuntarily Kate shrank back, and laid her hand on Marco's arm, as if to draw him away; for she felt that they were intruding upon a privacy that ought to be sacred, however mistaken the motives that prompted such a ceremonial. As she did so, she felt the Signor start, and looking up in his face she saw a deep flush overspread it, which was succeeded by a look of shame and distress. He readily withdrew from the sacristy; and, being followed by the rest of the party, they proceeded to the curious Spanish chapel, attached to the Church of Santa Maria Novella, and thence through the cloisters.

These cloisters are extremely interesting, and contain several beautiful epitaphs, some of which Marco pointed out to Kate, and read to her with deep pathos, or rather repeated them, for the shades of evening were already falling, and the heavy arches of the cloisters increased the darkness within. As they moved

to follow Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey and Ethel, one of the Dominican monks passed them, and Kate saw him cast a keen glance of curiosity, not unmingled with displeasure, at herself and at her companion. She felt sure he was the same whom they had just seen in the confessional, and whose countenance had made an unpleasant impression upon her.

But Marco did not observe him, or did not appear to do so, and continued his conversation, which he was just then carrying on in English. He had, very soon after his introduction to the Aubreys, informed them that he was not an entire stranger to their native language, having learnt to speak it, though very imperfectly, from his mother, whose acquaintance with it had been acquired early in life, before she left Venice. He expressed a great wish to improve himself in this knowledge; and therefore, whenever the practice of Italian was dispensed with, English was the language substituted for it.

This was a great relief to Mr. Aubrey, who delighted in conversing with intelligent strangers, and acquiring a knowledge of their opinions and characters, which he was not a sufficiently good linguist to do in Italian: and he found much to interest him in Signor Griffi's conversation on the political state of his oppressed but beloved country. The spirit of the young Venetian seemed to chafe at the thraldom in which Austria held his native land; and he evidently burned with an

intense desire to aid in setting her free—not only from a foreign yoke, but also from the equally heavy one which was imposed by her own domestic rulers.

It was not always safe to speak on such topics in Florence so freely as Marco and Mr. Aubrey frequently did; but their discussions being generally in English, led them to be more unguarded than they would otherwise have ventured on in a city where both religious and political freedom were unknown, and where spies were to be feared in every species of disguise.

Both Mrs. Aubrey and Ethel, being of more cautious dispositions, frequently hinted at the imprudence of such free expressions of opinion; but Kate delighted in listening to them, and showed by her kindling eye and glowing cheek how entirely she entered into Marco's yearning for freedom, and into her father's pride in the liberty secured to his countrymen by their own glorious Constitution.

On religious subjects they seldom touched; for, as Signor Griffi was believed to be a Roman Catholic, Mr. Aubrey avoided every topic that could lead to painful discussions or differences; but he and the rest of his family had remarked that Marco frequently volunteered observations on the forms of the national religion, and the practice of its ministers, that showed he was but little attached to it. Could this surprise them in a man of his intelligence and his inquiring mind;—a man, too, who evidently loved and venerated

the truth on every point that attracted his attention? But had he attained to the truth on the most important subject of all? or had he merely, like so many of his countrymen, learnt to see and despise the errors of his own Church, without embracing a purer faith, and following more holy practices?

This Kate feared: and when she observed that he did not conform to the superstitious observances of Catholicism, she resolved, if possible, to lead him to express still more openly his opinions with regard to them.

It was this purpose which made her linger behind the rest of her companions in the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella; and gave her courage, when Marco had repeated the epitaphs,—one of which ended in a request for the prayers of the passers by,—to say,—

"Can you comply with that request, Signor Griffi?"

He looked at her anxiously-inquiring face for a moment, as the evening light fell on it between the fretted arches of the cloister, and a smile passed over his countenance, as he replied,—

"No, Signora, I could not comply with such a vain superstition."

"But tell me,—forgive the question," she added, in a hesitating voice,—"do you also look on what we saw just now in the sacristy as a vain superstition?"

"I look on it as worse," he answered, with some

emotion. "I regard it as a sin. It is one of the most powerful means by which we are kept in bondage; for the patriotic sentiments and hopes of my countrymen are too often made known to the priests, in confession, by their wives. They betray it all to the police, and this is the reason why we are surrounded by spies, and deprived of freedom, religious and literary, as well as political. It is hard, very hard, for those who feel within them a free spirit, to submit to such degradation."

"I often wonder you do submit to it," said Kate, very earnestly.

Marco Griffi smiled a bitter smile, and answered in a deep firm voice,—

"We shall not do so long."

Then, after a pause, he changed his tone, and added more cheerfully,—

"But why do you urge rebellion, Signora? I thought that, with all your freedom, you English were determined royalists, and very loyal to the powers that govern you!"

"And so we are! We would die for our good Queen Victoria; and we would fight—I mean all our men would,"—and Kate laughed at her own energetic declaration.—"Yes, we would fight for our noble Constitution! But if we were oppressed as you are, we would never endure it. The sight of foreign soldiers in our country would not be borne for an hour. I, as a

stranger, can hardly keep my patience, when I see those stern hard-featured Austrians lording it over your beautiful Italy! How then can her own sons endure it?"

Why did Marco make a quick sign to his enthusiastic young companion to be silent, and, quickening his steps, hasten with her to rejoin the rest of the party? They had reached the door that led to the well-known *Spezieria*, or laboratory for the manufacture of perfumes, which is attached to the convent of Santa Maria Novella, and is conducted by the monks. At this door they paused, to allow Kate and the Signor to overtake them; and as they did so, the same monk whom Kate had before observed in the cloister again passed them; but this time he studiously kept his face concealed. He must have allowed them to pass him, while he stood in the deep shadow of one of the pillars, and then have followed them noiselessly. Something more like fear than anything Kate was in the habit of feeling struck on her heart, and blanched her cheek for a moment; but the feeling soon passed away, when she recollected the language in which she and Marco had spoken; and she entered this "Palace of Sweet Scents," the beauty and singularity of which made her quite forget what had just occurred, and where the serene countenances and polite attentions of the Dominican brethren seemed to forbid any suspicions of a painful nature.

The saloon into which they were ushered was gorgeously furnished with crimson and gold; and chairs and couches, of elegant and luxurious forms, were scattered over the inlaid and polished floor; while two magnificent candelabra stood in the corners of the apartment, and shed a soft light over the scene. The air was heavy with the delicious odour of orange-blossoms; and when the visitors were led from the saloon into a wide passage, opening on one side into a very small enclosed garden, radiant with flowers, they found it piled with heaps of those exquisite blossoms, and also of lavender, and other materials for the laboratory.

In another apartment, fitted up with innumerable shelves, laden with small bottles, they purchased some of the products of this very remarkable establishment; and then proceeded to their lodging, at the door of which Marco took leave of them, and hurried away. Perhaps he had work to do which was not connected with his art, but which he felt must not now be any longer delayed.

Kate thought there was a peculiar look of determination in his eye, and a something unwonted in his tone, as he bade them adieu; but she did not mention her observations. She retired to rest,—not to sleep,—ill satisfied with the result of her conversation with Marco. She had only ascertained that, like herself, he felt a contempt for all that he regarded as weak and

superstitious; but she had not discovered that he had the same sympathy with her in her better feelings. She had allowed her enthusiasm for liberty, and her hatred of oppression, to carry her beyond the bounds of prudence; and while expressing too openly her sentiments on those subjects, she had lost the opportunity of drawing out Marco's religious opinions, and letting him perceive the strength and the earnestness of her own.

CHAPTER IX.

"WELL, Mr. Reginald, I wish you a prosperous journey, and a safe return;" said old Rebecca Fowler, as she opened the heavy iron gates of Altringham Park for her young master to pass through.

Reginald had been to take leave of his aunt and cousin, previous to setting out to join his family at Florence; and he was now proceeding on foot to the neighbouring railway station, having despatched Herbert and his baggage some time before. He was in no hurry; so he stopped kindly to return his old friend's greeting, and thanked her for her good wishes.

"Yes, sir, I pray for the Lord's blessing upon you," continued Rebecca, "and upon all your honourable house. I trust you will find them in good health; and please to tell my honourable master and mistress that it will be a joyful day when we see their faces here again. And the dear young ladies, too; Miss Janet has never been the same since they left the Hall."

"She does indeed look ill, Rebecca; but you know she has had much to depress her spirits."

"Yes, Mr. Reginald, I know she has;" and the good

old woman looked kindly and knowingly into Reginald's face. "I know the dear child's heart has been sorely wounded, and not only by the old master's death; but I did hope, Mr. Reginald, that may be you would comfort her."

"Indeed, Rebecca, that is not in my power. What my poor cousin has lost will never, I believe, be made up to her in this world; nor would she wish it."

"Well, well! it's sad to see a fair young creature pining and dwining away," said Rebecca, sorrowfully; "but the Lord's will be done!" Then, looking almost reproachfully at Reginald's face, which had not become more blooming since the departure of his family, she added, "Certainly, Captain Aubrey was a very grand gentleman; he looked fit to be the master of the fine old Hall. I beg your pardon, Mr. Reginald, I do not mean any offence; but I hope you will come back from those foreign parts, looking as strong and healthy as he used to do, when—bless his honourable soul!—he would stop here, and ask after Miss Janet, before ever he went up to the Hall." And the old lady fairly wept into the corners of her white apron, at the disappointment of her recent hopes, and the memory of those which had been blighted long ago.

Reginald was glad to put an end to this conversation; so he shook hands with Rebecca, while she sobbed out her "duty to all the honourable family," and then walked rapidly on his way.

The few days that he had spent at Altringham had not given him matter for very pleasant reflections. He saw that Janet was unhappy, though she strove to appear cheerful; and that her strength had decreased, though she continued to tax it to the utmost, in performing acts of benevolence among her poor neighbours. That her domestic life should not be happy, did not surprise Reginald; for he knew her mother's character too well to suppose that any real comfort could be felt, even by her own daughter, in companionship with her. The still recent death of her husband, of course, prevented her or Janet from entering into any general society; and the latter had no intimate friends within her reach. But one individual was constantly admitted at the Hall, and received by Mrs. Aubrey with a welcome that struck a pang to her daughter's heart every time she witnessed it. This was Sir Hugh Duncombe, whose visits had become more and more frequent, and his attentions more assiduous, ever since the Charles Aubreys had left England. If Janet's gentle nature could have allowed her to hate any one, she would have hated Sir Hugh.

The only other friend whose society was encouraged was Mr. Sloper; and though he endeavoured to make himself agreeable to Janet, and discussed with her all his schemes for the good of the parish,—which, by the way, never originated in him, and never called forth much of his co-operation except in words,—yet he failed

signally in his efforts. Janet believed him to be a good and estimable man, and she blamed herself for not liking him. She could find no fault with his appearance, his manners, or his conversation, which was always intelligent, and often expressive of excellent sentiments. And yet the young girl had an instinctive feeling of repulsion towards him; and she always felt less peaceful and happy in her own mind after listening to his exhortations on religious duty, and his interpretation of the doctrines of the Church. There was something dry and unsatisfactory in his way of treating all such subjects, that contrasted painfully in Janet's heart with the happy, cheerful discussions she had held during the past winter with Reginald and Kate, and made her more than ever regret their absence. Her cousin's visit, though brief, had therefore been a great comfort to her; and for some time after his departure, she felt more able to reply to the sophistry of Mr. Sloper's arguments, and more able to see her duty clearly, and perform it steadily, in spite of the want of encouragement and sympathy that she daily experienced.

A short time sufficed to bring Reginald to Florence; for he did not linger at Paris, feeling that his own health required the balmy air of Italy, and the cheerfulness of his own family circle. Very joyfully was he welcomed by all, but by none more joyfully than by his sister Kate. He saw immediately that a cloud hung on her brow, and that her spirits were far less equable

than formerly; but her health appeared as good as ever, and she entered with great interest into every scheme for rides and walks, and still longer excursions, that was proposed for the amusement and benefit of her brother. Still there was a cloud, unobserved, perhaps, by those who had been continually with her, but very perceptible to Reginald's eyes, and he resolved, if possible, to discover the cause.

This he was not long in believing he had done; for, after a few days had elapsed, and he observed that his sisters were proceeding with their studies in drawing and painting unassisted by any master, he inquired whether the young artist, of whom he had heard so much in the letters from Florence, had left the town, or had discontinued his instructions?

He put the question to Kate, but she did not appear to hear it, and only bent over her drawing and moved her pencil more quickly, though with a less steady hand. Reginald saw, too, that her colour rose to her very brow, and then retreated, leaving her face very pale. He did not address her again, but turned to his mother for a reply.

"It is quite a mystery to us," she said,—and she did not look towards Kate as she spoke,—"what has become of Signor Griffi. More than a week has passed since we saw him: I think, Ethel, it was that evening that he went with us to Santa Maria Novella."

Kate wondered how her mother could doubt which

was the last time that they had parted with Marco; but she did not care to impress it upon her. Mrs. Aubrey continued: "He used always to be so regular in his attendance, and so punctual to the time. He did not give any reason for absenting himself, nor has he supplied the girls with studies as usual. I fear he may be ill; though, if so, it is strange he has not let us know. If I knew where his mother resides, I would send to inquire, or I would go myself and call on her, for I feel interested about her. So good and devoted a son must have a good mother."

Reginald and Mrs. Aubrey smiled at one another as she made this remark; and Ethel observed,—

"But our old friend, the Professor, probably knows where she lives. He spoke of her as of an intimate acquaintance. Cannot we inquire from him, mamma?"

"Yes, Ethel, that is a good idea. I will ask your father to go to Signor Bezzuoli's *studio* this afternoon, for I am really anxious about Marco Griffi."

Kate had risen from her seat, and left the room during this conversation; and Mrs. Aubrey continued, "He is a singularly pleasing young man, Reginald, and I am sure you would like him. He is hardly calculated, perhaps, for a drawing-master; but he is a perfect gentleman, and I feel much for him, as he only follows that profession as the surest way of providing for his widowed mother. I should like to know the history of her former life."

"It is so singular," said Ethel, "that she, as a Venetian, should have learnt to speak our language, and have taught it to her son. He made no reply when Katie asked him one day how his mother had acquired it. I always feel as if there was some mystery attached to them; but I am sure there is nothing to be ashamed of. Signor Griffi looks as if he knew neither shame nor fear."

"He has won favour with you all, I see," replied Reginald; "and I hope I shall soon have the privilege of beholding this hero, and judging for myself."

That evening Reginald proposed to Kate that they should make an excursion on foot to the curious old church of San Miniato, instead of accompanying their parents and Ethel, who had engaged one of the pleasant open carriages, so common in Florence, to convey them to an ancient villa some miles along the Arno. To this proposition Kate very gladly assented; for to walk or ride with her brother had always been a favourite recreation with her, and just now a certain restlessness of spirit made the confinement of a carriage irksome to her, and she longed to roam at liberty over the lovely hills that surround *Firenze la bella.*

No sooner, therefore, had a pair of the active little black Florentine horses borne away the rest of the party at a rapid pace over the ill-paved slippery streets, than Reginald and his sister sallied forth to spend the evening in exploring San Miniato and its neighbour-

hood. They passed through the Goldsmiths' Bridge, and paused at many of the stalls which line each side of the covered way, to admire the gold and silver filagree-work and the beautiful Florentine mosaics, that are always profusely displayed for sale, and which give the name to this extraordinary bridge. But such ornaments had little attraction for them, and they soon went forth on the other side, and bent their way towards the hill. The day had been very sultry; and the sun, though sinking towards the west, still poured a flood of heat and of rich red light upon the valley; and Kate and Reginald went slowly on their way, often stopping, as they ascended the steep and winding road, to look back on the exquisite scenery around and behind them, and the mountains of Vallombrosa in the far distance.

At length they reached the platform in front of the picturesque old tower and church, and from thence they gazed with intense and deep delight on the glorious view of Florence, the far-famed Val d'Arno, and the surrounding mountains, all studded with villas, peeping forth among groves and vineyards. They were silent, for they felt that strong admiration can never be adequately expressed in words; and Kate had little inclination to converse that evening, even with her brother. But while they leaned on the ivy-covered parapet that bounds the platform before the church, their attention was attracted by sounds of sorrow that

reached their ears distinctly, and seemed to come from the other side of the building.

The voice of lamentation and weeping appeared to be that of a child; and gentle words of affection and comfort were uttered in reply by some one who evidently shared the grief she sought to soothe.

Kate did not pause to reflect whether her presence might be an unwelcome intrusion, but true to the impulses of her nature, which always led her to hasten forward at any call of distress, she immediately hurried towards the spot from whence the sounds proceeded, followed rather more hesitatingly by Reginald.

The soft green turf prevented their footsteps from being heard, and they stood a few moments looking silently at the beautiful living picture which met their eyes. On a large stone, which had fallen from the ruined wall, and was half buried in luxuriant creepers, sat a tall and graceful girl, whose noble features and well-formed head bespoke her to be of gentle blood. The tower of the church cast a shade on the spot where she was seated, and she had thrown her large straw hat upon the ground by her side, and had shaken back the heavy tresses of her glossy black hair, and had bared her lofty brow to the soft evening breeze that was beginning to sigh through the olive groves that clothed the hill-side. Her fine black eyes, in which tears were glistening, were raised towards heaven with a look of deep and earnest supplication, as if from thence alone

she hoped for aid; but if she prayed, it was in silence. A child—a fair young child—was kneeling by her, and, with hands clasped over her brow, was hiding her face in the elder girl's lap, as if to stifle the sobs that still shook the delicate frame. At a little distance, leaning on a staff, stood an aged and venerable man, whose garb showed him to be a domestic, but whose air of respectful commiseration, as he gazed on the two sorrowing girls, showed also that he was a humble friend.

Kate and her brother would have retired as noiselessly as they had approached, and have left the mourners undisturbed, for they could not hope to alleviate their grief. But as they moved, the child's quick ear caught the sound of their feet, and raising her head, she turned her large soft eyes in the direction in which they stood, and lifted her finger as in a listening attitude. Then she said softly, in Italian,—

"Sister, there are strangers near us. Can they be there to watch us? Oh, let us go home! I will not weep any more, Isabel, I will be quite still; and Madre Griffi shall not know of the sorrow that has come upon us all until you think it best to tell her."

And again the tears gushed forth from those sad eyes, and again the child hid her face on her sister's knee, while another burst of grief belied her promises of composure.

Why did Kate start so nervously, and catch her brother's arm as if to detain him? She had heard some words of the child's address to her sister; and

those words were enough to fill her with anxiety, and with an earnest desire to know more of the cause of these girls' sorrow.

"Stay, Reginald," she whispered; "they spoke of Signora Griffi. Can they be her daughters? But," she added, as if speaking to herself; "he never told us that he had sisters." And Kate coloured deeply at her own thoughts. "Let us speak to those girls, Reginald, or to that old servant, who looks almost as sad as they do. Perhaps he can tell us why Signor Griffi has never called on us since the day we visited Santa Maria Novella together."

Reginald was concerned to see how deeply interested Kate evidently felt on the subject of the Signor's continued absence; and he was aware of the awkwardness of their present situation, and his English feelings made him rather shrink from accosting strangers. But he knew that all his family, as well as Kate, were anxious to know the cause of the young artist's disappearance; and, if the truth must be told, he was so much struck by the beauty and grace of the young Italian sisters, that he had no objection to remain a little longer a spectator of the scene. He therefore did not oppose Kate's wish to make the acquaintance of either the old servant or of his mistresses; but left her to exercise her womanly tact and womanly sympathy, in endeavouring to gain the confidence of some one of the party, and acquire the information she so greatly desired.

CHAPTER X.

KATE had made wonderful progress in the knowledge of Italian since she had resided at Florence; and the interest she now felt in her subject enabled her to express herself with unusual fluency, as she approached the sisters, and gracefully apologised for intruding upon their grief.

"You will pardon me, I am sure," she continued, "when you know that it is not idle curiosity that has induced me to address you. But I accidentally heard the name of Signora Griffi as connected with your sorrow, and I feel greatly interested in her. I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance, but I—that is, my father and mother—know and esteem Signor Marco Griffi." How poor Kate blushed as she said this, and how her eyes fell beneath the piercing glance of the young Italian! Still she continued, "Has anything occurred to him which can cause grief to his mother? He has spoken of her with such devoted affection, that we should regret to find that such is the case."

As Kate looked down, she met the full gaze of the child's large eyes, which seemed to be fixed upon her

countenance, but yet did not respond to her own look of gentle pity; and she heard her whisper to her sister, who had risen to receive the strangers,—

"Isabel, is she a friend of Marco's, and is she English? Oh, perhaps she could help us!"

"Hush, dear Juana," replied her sister, drawing the child close to her; "the lady is surely one of the free and happy English, who know nothing of the sorrows that fall upon us. She pities us; but I fear she cannot help us. Oh, Signora!" she added, and again the tears rose to her eyes; "if you know Marco Griffi, you will know what his mother—what all who love him, must feel—He has been betrayed to the police, betrayed by one to whom he was as a brother, and God only knows what will become of him."

Kate trembled, and for a moment the colour forsook her cheek; but she eagerly inquired,—

"When did this occur? and what is his crime?—his supposed crime, I mean;—for it cannot be real."

Isabel's eloquent eyes thanked her, as she replied,—

"You are right, Signora; Marco is innocent of every crime, save that of loving his country too well, and feeling too deeply her state of degradation. Brave, noble Marco! Already he is in one of the dungeons of Milan, where so many of our ill-fated countrymen have been imprisoned, and whence so few return. It is now many days since he disappeared, and his friend Pietro Ruffini also; and it is only just now that I have

received intelligence of their sad fate. Signora Griffi has dreaded some calamity connected with her son's political feelings; but this is worse than we could have anticipated. We thought—we hoped—they had fled to some land of liberty; but this letter is from Pietro's wife;" and she held up a paper, the characters on which were scarcely legible; "this sad letter tells me that Rosa Ruffini has had secret intelligence from her husband, and that he and Marco are now in the hands of their enemies—the enemies of freedom—at Milan. Oh, how shall I break it to Marco's mother? how shall I go home to tell her that her son—her idolized son—is lost?"

And Isabel's tall stately form quivered with emotion, which she strove to repress; while Juana again hid her face in the folds of her sister's dress, and wept tears of passionate grief.

If Kate was hardly less moved, she successfully hid her feelings, and preserved her outward composure. Indeed, as the grief of the young Italians had become more manifest, a coldness had crept over the demeanour of the English girl; but the kindness of her manner towards them was unchanged.

Reginald had stood aloof when she first addressed them; but he had gradually approached, almost unconsciously, and he now joined his sister, who rapidly repeated to him, in their native tongue, what she had just heard. He was a good linguist, and able to take

a part in the conversation; and the respectful interest he showed soon won the confidence of the stranger, and drew from her all the particulars of Marco Griffi's story with which she was herself acquainted; her graceful gestures, and expressive countenance, often making her intelligible, when her words might have failed to convey her meaning to English ears.

"Oh, Signora!" she exclaimed; "have you any power to help us? any influence with the government which thus punishes all who are even suspected of loving liberty? But I fear that both Marco and his friend are too deeply implicated to allow any hope of their liberation. There has been a rising in one of the frontier towns, and a blow has been struck for Italy's freedom, —but struck too soon. Rosa Ruffini says that she knew of the conspiracy, and knew that Marco and Pietro were leagued with many other brave spirits at home and abroad, who were to have assembled in considerable force at the appointed place some weeks hence. But, poor misguided Rosa! she, under the supposed seal of inviolable secresy, disclosed the plan to her confessor, one of the monks of Santa Maria Novello, and that very night Marco and Pietro disappeared. Father Bernardo, as she calls him, was seen prowling mysteriously the following morning near Ruffini's house, but the prey was gone; and in a grove near our dwelling, my sister heard strange whisperings, and told me she knew that some evil was coming upon us.

Doubtless Marco and his friend discovered that they were watched, and hurried on the execution of plans that were not sufficiently matured, and this is the miserable result."

Isabel paused, almost from want of breath, for she had spoken rapidly, and her feelings seemed to choke her. But Kate had been much struck by some parts of her narration, and eagerly exclaimed,—

"Now I understand why Signor Griffi started, and looked so strange, when we saw a graceful young woman kneeling at the confessional in the sacristy of Santa Maria; and who that evil-eyed monk was, who followed us through the cloisters, and looked so malignantly at Marco—at Signor Griffi I mean. Oh, I see it all! That penitent was Signora Ruffini, and the monk was that very father Bernardo, of whom you spoke."

"No doubt it was so," replied Isabel; "and he has long been Marco's enemy, and Pietro's also, though he persuaded his wife that he was his faithful friend. We have tried to open Rosa's eyes, but all in vain; and now her mad credulity has brought ruin on those she loved best on earth. Poor Rosa!" she added, more gently; "you are most to be pitied, you will feel that you have murdered your own husband, and the man who was as your husband's brother! Alas, how many hearts beside your own have you made desolate!"

Kate looked at the glistening eyes of the lovely speaker, and a strange expression of pain rested on her

own countenance. Perhaps, it was to hide it, that she now gently took the hand of the younger girl, and drew her a little aside, while Reginald continued to converse with her sister.

"Tell me," she said to the child, whose large dark blue eyes were again fixed on her with the strange look which she had observed before; "tell me whether you are Signora Griffi's daughters? are you sisters to Marco?"

"No, Signora," replied the child, "Signora Griffi is not our mother; but she is our best, our dearest friend, and Marco,—oh, Marco is more than a brother to us."

Did the young Juana observe the cloud that passed over the English lady's features, or did she feel the trembling of her hand, that she pressed it as she continued, "And you are sorry for us, Signora? you know Marco, you say, but you cannot know him and love him as we do: and Isabel is afraid this sad news will kill his mother." And again the ready tears rose to the child's soft eyes.

"But," continued Kate; "if Signora Griffi is only your friend, why did your sister speak as if her dwelling was also yours?"

"Because we all live together in Isabel's house," said Juana. "When our father died, and left us alone in that large old villa down in the valley there—can you see it? Isabel says she can see it from this hill, though the trees almost hide it—when we were left alone, we

begged Signora Griffi to come and live in some of the silent desolate rooms, and she has been a mother to us ever since. And whenever Marco could leave Florence, he came to the villa also, and we were so peaceful and contented. He and Isabel and the Signora used to sing together so sweetly, and I listened till I thought I saw bright and beautiful things, and sometimes I sang with them; and I felt the warm evening sun, and the sweetness of the air, and I was happy. Oh, Marco! will you never come to make home happy again?"

Kate had heard more than she had probably either expected or wished. Still she continued to question Juana, in whom she felt a deep interest, for she feared the sweet child was visited with one of the heaviest afflictions that fall to the share of humanity. She dared not ask, and yet she desired to know if this was the case.

"I do not know your house, Juana," she said; "and there are many beautiful villas down below,—which of them is your dwelling?"

"I cannot show you," answered the child, sadly. "I have never seen it: but I know it is very lovely, and there are pillars round it, and vines and creeping plants hang from the verandahs, and I can smell the orange-blossoms, and feel the soft flowers, and God is very good to me; He has given me Isabel, and she has eyes for me, and takes care of me. And God did give me Marco, too; but now he is taken away, and his mother will not

live when he is gone, and Isabel and I shall be desolate again."

The child's sorrow was becoming too infectious. Kate hastily drew her hand across her eyes, and spoke some words of hope and comfort to Juana; and then she led her back to her sister, who was still engaged in animated conversation with Reginald. But twilight was creeping over the scene, and Kate felt that it was time to return to Florence. She, therefore, begged Isabel to point out the villa in which Signora Griffi lived, and promised to persuade her mother to go and see her the following day. Then she bade her farewell, and drew away the rather reluctant Reginald.

"Kate," he observed, as they descended the hill of San Miniato; "that Signora Isabel strongly resembles you. I do not think I ever met any one who reminded me of you so much as she does."

"I presume you mean that for a compliment, Reginald," replied his sister, with more of sharpness in her voice than Reginald was accustomed to hear; "but I confess, I do not see what resemblance you can discover between her black hair and eyes, and my brown hair and blue eyes; and, if I have what you so often call an excited manner, I cannot believe that I show it to strangers as that Italian girl did."

"Why, Kate, I thought you admired enthusiasm in every one; and surely you, who have such a hatred of all oppression, must have sympathized with the feelings

she expressed for her degraded country, and with her aspirations after freedom!"

"Oh, yes! I could feel for beautiful Italy almost as much as she does, and I cannot tolerate tameness or indifference in any one. But I should certainly not wish to resemble the Signora in her manner of talking of Marco Griffi. If he had been her brother it would have been quite a different thing; but I find, from that interesting blind child, that they are in no way related to him. It is rather an extraordinary thing for any girl to go into such raptures about her friend."

"Well, Kate, perhaps you are right there," observed Reginald; and a peculiar expression, partly of amusement, partly of annoyance, was on his countenance as he spoke. "I own, I should have preferred her not expressing herself quite so strongly about Signor Griffi. But she did look so beautiful at the time, and the expression of her flashing eyes was so like inspiration, and every movement of her figure was so natural and so graceful, that I forgot the object of her enthusiasm in admiration for the subject of it. O Kate, I should like to know that such a creature as that could feel the same enthusiasm for me!"

"Well, Reginald," replied Kate, and she forgot her own rather irritated feelings, in surprise at this little out-burst from her brother. "Well, Reginald, I never knew you so dazzled by beauty before! Pray never again lecture me for allowing myself to be carried away

by first impressions. I shall tell Ethel that you have lost your heart to Signor Griffi's special friend; and she will begin to think seriously that the sooner you leave the land of beauty and romance, and return to matter-of-fact England, the better. But, dear Reginald," she continued; and the earnest look which she now directed to her brother's face showed what point was uppermost in her mind, "let us talk no more of the beautiful Isabel. Let us think only of the sad news she has told us, and of what can be done to avert the calamity that threatens to fall on Signora Griffi, and which would doubtless cause her death also. It is dreadful to think of those two young men being in the power of the tyrants who have enslaved Italy. That poor deluded Rosa Ruffini! What must now be her feelings! I am sure that Marco recognized her at that dreadful confessional, and foresaw what might be the probable result of her being subjected to the questionings and suggestions of such a man as her confessor appeared to be. Cannot our father, with his extensive acquaintance, and the influence he always obtains over every one he is connected with, do something to obtain the liberation of these brave and unfortunate mèn?—Oh, why did they rush so hastily into this desperate, and, as it seems, hopeless enterprise?—Could they expect to set their country free by such an act, when their numbers were so small?"

"Signora Anzilotti told me," answered Reginald,

"that there was every reason to expect a general rising of the friends of liberty. I suspect she was more in Griffi's confidence than she cared to tell. But it seems that the conspiracy had been suspected for some time by the police, and probably that treacherous confessor was leagued with them. When, therefore, that wretched woman revealed to her confessor all she had discovered from her husband and his friends, the monk hastened to betray it. Probably the parties implicated would have been immediately seized if they had remained quiet. At all events, they seem to have resolved on making one desperate effort, and risking all on its success. Unhappily, the enterprize signally failed, and Griffi, Ruffini, and several others of the leaders, are now in prison. I fear neither my father, nor, indeed, any one, even if they possessed far greater influence than he does, could induce the Austrian government to give up such offenders. We can but hope, that death may not be their punishment, but that it may be mitigated to exile, or perhaps a long captivity. Either of these would be terrible enough to contemplate; but God grant their lives may at least be spared!"

Reginald paused, much moved; and his heart was lifted up in fervent prayer for the preservation of the only man towards whom he had ever felt an emotion of jealousy, and Kate was too much absorbed in her own painful feelings to interrupt him.

Little more was said by either the brother or the

sister until they reached their home, where they found their parents and Ethel waiting for them rather anxiously, and wondering at their prolonged absence. The story they had to tell was listened to with the greatest interest by all; but Mr. Aubrey could not flatter Kate with any hope of his being able to render effectual assistance. He readily promised, however, to try every means in his power to influence those in authority; and he also expressed his intention of visiting the afflicted mother of Signor Griffi the following morning, and giving her all the consolation in his power, and Mrs. Aubrey willingly consented to accompany him. She well knew a mother's feelings and a mother's anxieties, and her kind heart was drawn very forcibly towards Signora Griffi, who was now enduring all the agonies of suspense, if not of despair.

CHAPTER XI.

The following day, Mr. Aubrey would have set out in search of Signora Griffi, but he heard of the arrival of some influential individual at Florence, and he therefore lost no time in hastening to seek his aid and counsel in the affair which so greatly interested him, and requested his wife to go with some of the young people, and endeavour to cheer the sorrowing family. So great was the interest felt by all the party, that none were willing to remain behind, and Mrs. Aubrey was accompanied by Reginald, Ethel, and Kate. They were driven at a brisk pace through varied and very lovely scenery, and soon reached the villa Anzilotti, which was situated about four miles from Florence, and not very distant from San Miniato.

As they approached the villa, they passed through vineyards and orchards, and finally along an avenue of ancient walnut-trees, that nearly concealed the house from their view until they were within a short distance of the fine old porch.

It had evidently been a place of importance in years gone by, and the pillars and balustrades that adorned

it were in the best taste, and highly picturesque. But it was also evident that the present inhabitants were either unable or unwilling to keep the mansion in perfect repair, or the grounds and shrubberies around it in the neat order to which the English eyes of our travellers were accustomed. Vines and other creeping plants, some of them in full bloom, hung in loose and graceful garlands from the porch and the verandahs; the turf was unmown, and the roses and myrtles flourished in unchecked luxuriance. Still it was a beautiful disorder, and Kate thought it far more *pictorial* than the trim gardens of her less favoured native clime.

The carriage drew up at the entrance, the door of which stood open to admit the welcome breeze; and in the wide and marble-paved hall sat the old servant whom Reginald and Kate had seen the preceding evening, taking his *siesta* in an antique chair of heavy carved work. He awoke at the sound of the wheels at the open door, and hastening to the steps, he smiled as he saw the animated inquiring glance of Kate; but it was a sad smile.

He replied to that glance, before Mrs. Aubrey could speak, by informing the party that his mistress and the Signorinas were at home, and assuring them that they would welcome the English strangers who had shown so much kindly interest in their distress.

At Mrs. Aubrey's request, he went to give notice of

their arrival to Signora Griffi, and soon returned, preceded by the beautiful Isabel, who appeared even more graceful and attractive than she had done the evening before. In the most courteous manner she received her visitors in her old paternal hall; but a bright colour rose to her clear pale cheek when she saw Reginald approach, and then she became paler than before, as she led the party through a corridor hung with old family pictures, to a small room at the end.

This room opened into the garden, and the air was perfumed with the blossoms of the orange-trees that stood in large pots near the window. The furniture was old, but in excellent taste, and a few fine pictures in antique frames hung on the tapestry-covered walls. A dignified-looking woman, who still bore the traces of extraordinary beauty, was seated on a low chair near the window, dressed in black, and with a silver crucifix suspended from her neck, and an illuminated Missal on her knee.

On the ground by her side knelt the same fair child who had so greatly interested Kate. A small instrument resembling a lute was in her hands, and she had evidently been singing to it, as if in the hope of soothing the troubled spirit of her companion.

A few words sufficed to explain to Signora Griffi the object of Mrs. Aubrey's visit; and she warmly expressed her gratitude for such unwonted sympathy from strangers.

"But," she added, with an accent of grief and resignation which was very touching; "I fear all hope is past. My son's doom is fixed, and it is beyond all human power to change it. All I can now do for him, is to supplicate the Blessed Virgin in his behalf, and trust to her to obtain for him that glory and happiness hereafter, which may never be his portion here." And gentle tears fell from her eyes on the gilded page before her, where prayers to the meek and humble Mary of Nazareth took precedence of those which were addressed to her Divine Son and Saviour. Mrs. Aubrey was more grieved than shocked, for the sentiments expressed by Signora Griffi were as familiar to her ear, as they were repulsive to her feelings. But she had tact and judgment enough to know that this was no time for religious controversy; and gently endeavouring to draw the sufferer's heart to rest on the one only Name that has power to heal the wounded spirit, she led her to speak of her son's past life, and of all that he had been to her since she was left a widow.

Kate listened with a painful and excited interest while Reginald conversed with Isabel, and Ethel endeavoured to make acquaintance with the blind Juana. She was naturally extremely fond of children, and always possessed a great influence over them, which she had exerted very successfully in the schools at Wareham; and her power did not fail her on the present occasion. The child was soon talking freely

to her in her low, musical voice, and telling of her occupations and her pastimes, her joys and her sorrows. But Signora Griffi desired to be alone with her visitor. She was affected by her sympathy, and greatly attracted by the sweetness of her manner; and she felt that in her she had found a friend who, if unable to lighten her sorrow and anxiety, could at least help her to bear it, by sharing it with her.

"Isabel," she said to the elder girl, "no doubt your friends would like to see the beauty of your grounds; and though not now kept as I once remember them, yet there is much, both in the gardens and in the old saloons, to interest strangers."

Isabel took the hint, and led her willing companions through the open window, while Mrs. Aubrey regarded her with admiration, and Signora Griffi with deep love.

"Is that beautiful girl a relative of yours?" asked the former, as soon as Isabel was out of sight. "I fancy I can trace a likeness in her features to you."

"No," replied the Signora, "she is not in any way connected to me, except by the ties of the fondest affection. Her mother was a native of the Vaudois country; and, when very young, she married a Florentine of good fortune; and it was while she dwelt in this villa with him that I formed a friendship with her, which no difference in our religious creeds was ever able to disturb. She died nine years ago, when poor Juana was only three years old, and Isabel eleven.

Their father was disconsolate at his loss; but he sought evil ways of banishing his grief, and greatly neglected his young daughters, who had no one to care for them but myself and a relative of their mother's, one of the Vaudois pastors. For her sake he loved the girls, and would have taken them to his home in the mountains of Piedmont, but Signor Anzilotti would not consent. The pastor has, however, never lost sight of the dear children, and has travelled from his distant home as often as he could accomplish the journey, to look after their welfare; and, as he said, to establish them in their mother's faith. She had extorted from me, on her dying bed, a promise that I would never seek to shake them in that faith; and their own father, though nominally a Catholic, was so indifferent to all the teaching and practices of the Church, that he took no heed of his daughters' being brought up *heretics*." The Signora paused at the word, and looked distressed. "Pardon me," she continued; "I forgot that I was speaking to an English lady. Your kindness has made me forget that we are not countrywomen."

"I wish you to forget it on every other point," replied Mrs. Aubrey; "but there I fear we may not hope to agree. May the Lord give to each of us His true light, and bring us at length to His presence, where no differences will exist! But pray, Signora, continue your interesting account of these orphan girls."

"I am never weary of talking of them," replied their

friend; "and," she added with some emotion, "they will soon be all that will be left to cheer the decline of my life. I once hoped that Isabel would have been my daughter by a nearer tie, as she has long been a child to me in duty and affection; but, like all my other best and fondest earthly hopes, this too has been destroyed. I know these trials are sent to purify my soul, and punish my sins, and fit me sooner to enter a state of bliss; but oh, Signora, they are hard to be borne by flesh and blood! But I will thank God for what He leaves, and cherish the blessing all the more fondly. I was about to tell you that four years ago Signor Anzilotti died very suddenly, leaving many debts, and his affairs in great confusion. This house, and a small estate adjoining it, was settled on his eldest daughter; but all else was swallowed up by his creditors, and the income of this place is only sufficient to maintain the dear girls in a very quiet manner. Isabel has never wished for gaiety: she is devoted to her blind sister, and never leaves her day or night; and after her father's death, she requested me so earnestly to come and live in part of this large, desolate house, that I could not find it in my heart to refuse. Marco was then studying at Rome; for he had resolved to give up all his ardent longing to enter the military profession, and to cultivate his fine talent for painting, in order that his mother's peace of mind, and his mother's daily comforts, might not be diminished. When he

returned to practise his art in Florence, he would not allow me to leave this villa and my adopted children, and he fitted up one of the old rooms as a *studio*, where, when he could leave the city, and enjoy a little rest in this sweet spot, he often came to finish his pictures, or make designs for new ones. Alas! that our happy, peaceful life should have been so sadly broken up, and that he who was our pride and our joy should have been taken from us, never—never to return!"

And the heart-broken mother lifted up her voice and wept, with all the passionate abandonment that characterises her countrywomen.

Mrs. Aubrey was much affected; but she was in the habit of controlling her emotions, even when most strongly excited; and she endeavoured to comfort the afflicted mother, and to encourage her to hope that her son's life might yet be spared, even if he should be banished from his native land. She soon succeeded in calming her grief, and leading her again to talk of her former life, and of her husband.

"Your son," observed Mrs. Aubrey, "has some knowledge of our language, which is very unusual with Italians; and he says he acquired it from you. May I ask, Signora, whether you learnt it in your youth merely as an accomplishment, or whether you have had other friends from among my countrywomen?"

The dark eyes of Signora Griffi were raised gratefully to the countenance of her visitor at this implied com-

pliment, and she answered, "No, I have never till this hour had the happiness of even making the acquaintance of any English lady, far less of calling her my friend. But I have loved your nation, Signora, for the sake of him whom I have lost, and who was more to me than all the world beside. He taught me to speak your language."

"Had he visited our country, then?"

A strange emotion passed over the pale features of the Signora, and for a few moments she hesitated. Then, with glowing cheeks, she fixed her eyes on her listener, and replied, "I had resolved never to own that my beloved, my noble-hearted husband, belonged to a nation from which he was an outcast. Indeed, he charged me, even on his death-bed, never to make it known, except under circumstances which, as far as I have been able to ascertain, have never yet occurred. But there is something in your countenance, lady, and in your sweet voice and gentle manner, that has won my confidence; and I know I cannot be wrong in telling you that I gave my hand and heart to an Englishman—to one who did honour to any country that could claim him as her own."

"But surely," said Mrs. Aubrey, "your name is an Italian one."

"Griffi was my father's name; and as he had no son to perpetuate it, he desired his son-in-law to assume it. This he did very willingly, for he wished to forget his

home and his family. He said he had been cruelly used, and he would never return to the land of his birth."

"But his own name?" inquired Mrs. Aubrey, rather hastily. "Forgive me, Signora, I feel really interested, though I would not intrude on your confidence further than you are pleased to admit me."

"His English name was Marcus Wareham," said the Signora; and her quick eye caught the involuntary start with which Mrs. Aubrey heard her reply, and marked the flush of agitation that rose to her fair face. "Have you ever heard that name before?" she asked. "Is it a name well known in your country?"

Mrs. Aubrey's heart was beating violently, and her whole frame trembled; but still she answered with a firm voice,

"No, Signora; it is not a common name, and I have never heard it, except as the name of a property. But do not think me too inquisitive if I ask how long it is since Mr. Wareham first came to Italy?"

"It is more than twenty-seven years since first I saw his noble form and beautiful Saxon face. Our acquaintance soon ripened into love; and as my father was almost as much fascinated by him as I was, he made no objection to our marriage, which speedily took place at Venice, where we dwelt. For some years we continued to reside with him, in all the luxury that makes that beautiful city so attractive. Then my father died; and we found that his apparent wealth

was only nominal. He had embarked in vast mercantile speculations which had failed. He had not told us of his losses; hoping, no doubt, that he should succeed in re-establishing his fortune: but, probably, anxiety and disappointment preyed upon his mind, and hastened his death. My husband was a proud man, and he could not well endure the change in our circumstances. He grew melancholy, and would sit gazing on our boy, and talking, as if to himself, of what Marco's prospects ought to have been. He once or twice wrote letters to some person in England, and waited very anxiously for the replies; but they never gave him any satisfaction, and I never asked him of their contents. He had secrets of his own, connected with his early life, which he told me it would only distress me to know; and as I always believed what my Marcus said, I never inquired further. Gradually his strength and spirits both declined; and in less than two years after my father's death I had to mourn the loss of the best of husbands."

A pause ensued; and many were the thoughts that passed through Mrs. Aubrey's mind, while her companion shed fresh tears at the memory of her early sorrows. Presently she again addressed the desolate widow; for her heart was greatly moved by all she had heard, and she yearned to ascertain one point, on which, if her suspicions proved correct, she felt the deepest interest.

"May I ask you one more question," she said. "Was your husband of the same religion as yourself?"

"If he had not been a member of our holy church, my father would never have given him my hand. He said he had been brought up a Protestant; but that he had never found any comfort in that religion, and was willing to embrace ours. I never thought he felt its holy influence as he ought to have done, though he outwardly conformed to some of its ordinances. But when his health became seriously impaired I fear his thoughts and his affections reverted to his old faith. He often spoke of all that his mother had taught him in his childhood, and of the prayers which he knew she had offered up for him day by day until her death. At last he refused to see the priest; and I could not oppose my Marcus in anything. I hoped and prayed that the Lord would receive him and pardon him, though he had relapsed into error; and I have had masses said for his soul continually since his death, as far as my straitened circumstances would permit. Oh, may they have availed to shorten the term of his punishment!"

"Forgive me if I bless God that he did return—I trust in sincerity—to the faith of his pious and excellent mother!" exclaimed Mrs. Aubrey, with much warmth. "Did he then pray earnestly to God in the name of Jesus Christ alone? Did he put his whole trust in His merits? And did he read God's holy

Word as his only guide and his only comfort? Tell me, pray tell me that he did, and I shall indeed be thankful!"

"It seems strange to me," replied the Signora, with a slight coldness in her manner, "that you should feel so deep an interest in the religious feelings of a stranger. I know that you Protestants accuse us of an undue anxiety to proselytise; but surely your eager inquiries concerning my husband's faith at the hour of his death proves at least a like anxiety."

"Pray pardon me," replied Mrs. Aubrey, while tears glistened in her earnest eyes. "I do not ask from vain curiosity, nor yet from a desire to revive in your mind painful recollections. I have better motives; and I entreat you to reply to my inquiries."

Signora Griffi could not look at that gentle face, now expressive of such deep feeling and such tender sympathy, and retain any sentiments of displeasure. She immediately answered:—

"I believe you, lady. Then take whatever comfort you can find from knowing that Marcus did pray most earnestly in that Name which you believe alone has power to bring pardon and peace to the penitent soul And he spent many hours daily in poring over a small English Bible, which he had always kept in his possession as a precious treasure, but which for many years he had never opened. I have seen him weep like a child over that book."

"Could you show me that Bible?" asked Mrs. Aubrey, with as much composure as she could assume.

Signora Griffi again regarded her with surprise; but she immediately rose from her seat, and, approaching a curiously-inlaid cabinet, she opened it and took from it a small volume, enclosed in a case of rich damask, and placed it in Mrs. Aubrey's now trembling hands. She drew off the cover, and opening the book at the title-page, she turned very pale, and with difficulty repressed an exclamation. On that page was written, in characters which were familiar to her, these words:—

"For my beloved son Marcus, with the blessing of his most affectionate mother, E. L. A."

Long she gazed on that inscription, which so wonderfully confirmed all that she had already divined. But she resolved not to disclose the discovery she had made to any one until she had consulted her husband. She therefore exerted her habitual power of self-command; and when, after a few moments, the young people re-entered the apartment, they saw no traces of emotion beyond the expression of sympathy and interest which they so often perceived on their mother's countenance when listening to any tale of anxiety or sorrow. There were several other questions which she still desired to ask; but her mind was satisfied on the most important points, and she was contented to defer

the gratification of her curiosity on minor subjects until Mr. Aubrey could accompany her to the villa.

She rose to depart; and she took leave of the Signora with very different feelings from those with which she had entered the house. Then she had wished to pay a kind attention to an afflicted stranger: now she felt that she had found a sister, in whose sorrows she could bear a part, and to whom she could offer all the consolation of affection. Her tone and manner went to the heart of Signora Griffi; and she also felt that now she had indeed found an English friend, and she warmly pressed her to repeat the visit whenever her other engagements would allow of her doing so. The kind sympathy of her visitor had cheered her spirits and inspired her with hope; and the future did not seem so altogether shrouded in darkness. Certainly sympathy does exert a most powerful and universal influence on the human heart. It is the key that unlocks the closest breast; the fire that melts the hardest nature: it is to a child what sunshine is to the budding plant; and at every age, and in every station, it is that genial influence for which the spirit yearns. It is not generosity, it is not even intrinsic worth, that brings affection; no, it is sympathy. The kindest actions, performed without sympathy, do not awaken love, though they may excite a measure of gratitude. And this is why the heart of the Christian is drawn out towards the Lord

Jesus with such deep affection: it is not only—it is not chiefly—because he owes to Him his life, his salvation, his hopes of heaven; but because that Divine Lord dwelt on earth with men, and shared their joys, their sorrows, and their sinless infirmities, as their sympathising elder brother.

CHAPTER XII.

ISABEL and Juana accompanied the party as they left the house; and at Ethel's request, Mrs. Aubrey was conducted, through the very lovely grounds that surrounded the villa, to one little secluded spot, that formed a striking contrast to the neglected appearance presented by the rest of the gardens and shrubberies.

It was a small flower-garden, laid out with exquisite taste, and surrounded by a rustic trellis covered with vines and flowering creepers. The beds were glowing with gay blossoms of every hue, and between them stood large pots, containing orange-trees in full bloom, that loaded the air with their heavy but delicious perfume. Old Francesco, the Venetian servant of Signora Griffi, who had followed her through her declining fortunes, and was now her only male attendant, was busily engaged in pruning the vines, so as to render them productive as well as ornamental; but all the lighter work was, Isabel informed her visitors, performed by herself, with such assistance as her blind sister, and occasionally Marco Griffi, could render her.

"Juana loves flowers dearly," she added; and she

looked tenderly at the little girl, who was feeling among the plants with light and active fingers, and gathering some fragrant blossoms. "I think they are her greatest pleasure; except, indeed, music, which is her passion, and which seems to speak to her very soul. But flowers are her playthings, and she will spend hours in sorting and arranging them, which she has learnt to do by the touch, and in forming bouquets for her *Madre Isidora,* as she calls Signora Griffi. I often think of the goodness of God in giving us these exquisite flowers, merely to add to our enjoyments. They are a source of such pure and satisfying pleasure to all who can look on their beauty, and even to those who, like my poor Juana, are denied that gratification."

The blind child had made up her bouquet, and had approached Mrs. Aubrey, whom she immediately distinguished by touching her dress; and, as Isabel ceased speaking, she gently placed the flowers in her hand, and looking up in her face with her large sightless eyes, she said, in a soft confiding voice,

"Do not be sorry for me, kind lady, for I am very happy; and God has given me many pleasures that others do not know of. I can see these flowers in my mind; and oh! they are so beautiful!—more beautiful than anything else in this world, except my sister Isabel. I see her face as the face of an angel, when she talks to me of heaven, and our mother who is dwelling there. And *Madre Isidora* is beautiful too;

and so is my brother Marco: I can see him still, as I have always seen him, in my mind; but I cannot hear his voice. Isabel, he will come back to us;—I know he will!" And a strange wild look was in the child's eyes, as if she saw things that others could not discern.

Isabel looked troubled; and drawing Juana towards her, she stooped down and spoke to her in a gentle under-tone, and thus hid her own face from the too-scrutinizing glances of Katie and Reginald; the former of whom coloured deeply, and turned away to examine the orange-blossoms, while her brother's brow contracted, and his expressive countenance showed that the subject which so deeply interested the Italian sisters was not pleasing to him.

What an insidious feeling is jealousy! It may often be detected, even before the sentiment that prompts it is discovered; and the sensation is always one of pain and inward dissatisfaction. So it was with both Reginald Aubrey and his sister; and, generous as were both their natural dispositions, they yet felt irritated and displeased, and angry with themselves for being so. Why,—thought each of them, as they silently followed the rest of the party,—why should not Isabel feel admiration and esteem for one so calculated to inspire those sentiments as Signor Griffi? And why should not Marco love a being so beautiful, so amiable, so intellectual as Signora Anzilotti? To these inward

queries they could give no satisfactory replies; so they bade adieu to Isabel more coldly than they were themselves aware of, and drove away towards Florence with their mother and Ethel.

Mrs. Aubrey was so much occupied by reflecting on all she had heard from Signora Griffi, that she scarcely spoke; but Ethel was full of admiration for Isabel, and pitying interest for the blind Juana; and she soon drew her brother and sister into conversation, which made them forget their momentary ill humour, though it could not banish from the heart of either a sense of heaviness and disappointment. Reginald grew animated in listening to his sister's praises of the young Italian beauty; and he again declared that the resemblance which he had already observed between her and Kate, became more apparent as he saw more of her.

"It is not her hair, or her eyes, or perhaps any of her features, that are like yours," he said, "but there is an expression, a manner, an animation, that I seldom see except in my little Katie; and I like and admire it."

"I suppose," replied Kate, "it is the same kind of resemblance as that between Signor Griffi and our uncle Marcus, and which struck me the first moment I saw the Signor at Genoa. Their features and colouring are as different as mine and Isabel's, and yet the likeness is very strong."

Mrs. Aubrey started as Kate made this remark, which fell in so exactly with the current of her own thoughts; but she did not speak, and Kate proceeded:

"I wonder whether our father will be able to effect anything in his favour. England ought surely to interfere, and prevent such a deed of cruelty and injustice as his condemnation would be!"

"I fear, Kate," said Ethel, "that England, however she may abhor cruelty and injustice, has no power to prevent the Government from exercising its despotic laws. And were it otherwise, how could we hope that our father would be able to excite such an interest in the case among those in power, as to induce them to act speedily and effectually? It would be better, I fear, for Signora Griffi to abandon all hope at once. It will only add to the bitterness of her eventual disappointment."

Probably Ethel said this with reference to others besides Signora Griffi; for she looked sadly at her sister's downcast countenance, and turned away from the contemplation with a sigh.

Presently Reginald observed, "What an act of imprudence it seems to have been in Griffi and his confederates to break out into open revolt when they were so unprepared to carry on their resistance against their oppressors! What could they expect but defeat?"

"How could they help it?" exclaimed Kate, with flushed cheek and kindling eye. "How could they

avoid making one effort for liberty, even if it was to be their last? They were betrayed by these villainous hypocritical priests, and they knew that they had no choice but either to flee from their country (which probably they could not then have effected), or to make a bold stand with such forces as they could collect. Surely they chose the right, the noble course; and Marco Griffi—I mean all the brave band—can never repent that they did so, whatever may be the result! Had I been born an Italian and a man, I would have done the same. I would have shed my blood for this fair land, and have died as a martyr, if I could not have lived as a free man!"

Certainly Kate did look like Isabel as she rapidly uttered these words, and gazed over the lovely scene before her with eyes that glistened with something more than enthusiasm. She was always remarkable for her readiness to defend the absent, and to speak for those who could not speak for themselves. This object would make her, at any time, forget all her natural shyness, and express herself with a strength of language which was not always altogether becoming. But Katie could not help it. If either feeling or principle were concerned, she was constrained to speak. Her cheek might glow, her heart might beat, her lips might even quiver with the struggle; but what she believed to be truth must be uttered, cost what it might. Her quick wit, and keen perception of the

ridiculous, made it a great temptation to her to make sharp and amusing remarks, and to raise a laugh even against her best friends. But she was never guilty of saying anything really ill-natured or censorious; and the least approach to what she considered to be injustice roused her indignation in a moment. It is to be presumed she thought Reginald unjust towards Marco and his unfortunate friends on the present occasion; for she certainly took up the cudgels in their defence with such great earnestness as to attract the attention of Mrs. Aubrey, and rouse her from her reverie.

"Dear Kate," she said, gently, "no one would blame our poor young friend for desiring, and even for attempting to accomplish, the deliverance of his country from oppression and wrong; but we must all deeply regret that he has engaged in so hopeless an enterprise, and perhaps cast away fruitlessly a life which was so valuable to his mother and his friends, and might have proved so useful to his countrymen. All that can be done shall be done to obtain his liberation. I can answer for your father's using every means in his power for that purpose; but I am not sanguine as to the result." And, well as her children knew her kind and pitying nature, they were surprised at the grief and agitation that her tone and manner expressed.

By this time they had reached their home; and to the surprise of the young people, Mrs. Aubrey, instead

of entering on the subject of her visit to Signora Griffi in their presence, requested her husband's private attention, and withdrew with him. All that evening Mr. Aubrey seemed deeply occupied with earnest and sad thoughts, and busily engaged in writing letters to several of his English friends: and the following morning, immediately after breakfast, he and his wife set out alone to the villa.

No doubt remained on Mr. Aubrey's mind that Signora Griffi was the widow of his long-lost brother Marcus, and that the young painter, whose life was now in such imminent peril, was his own nephew. But he wished to ascertain the fact with absolute certainty before he allowed the Signora to have any suspicion of it; and therefore he conversed with her for some time, and led her to repeat the substance of all that she had told Mrs. Aubrey the previous day; and then he requested her to show him the Bible which had so much interested his wife. The sight of his own beloved mother's handwriting convinced him that there was no mistake; and he readily guessed that his brother had laid aside the name of Aubrey, and assumed that of Wareham, as one that he knew and loved. It only now remained to ascertain what were the circumstances under which Marcus had enjoined his wife to make known his name and his nation, and whether she had any idea that Wareham was not his actual family name.

In reply to his inquiries on these points, she said:—

"I never had any suspicion that my husband possessed any other name than that by which I first knew him—Marcus Wareham. But when my son became acquainted with you, Signor, and your amiable family, he told me that his father had spoken to him before his death of a family of the name of Aubrey, to whom, he said, he was connected; and he charged him to remember that his own name was Marcus Aubrey Wareham. My husband desired Marco not to mention this to me, unless he was ever compelled to leave me for any length of time, or his life should be in danger, or unless he received a letter from his agent in England, to whom he wrote shortly before he died; in which case, he desired him to reply to the questions which that person would put to him, and to enclose to him a sealed paper which he then gave him. Marco was very young at that time, but he implicitly obeyed his father's commands; and he only communicated all this to me, and gave the sealed packet into my charge, the night before he left me—alas, I fear, for ever!"

To hide her emotion, Signora Griffi rose, and took from her cabinet the paper in question, which she placed in Mr. Aubrey's hand, saying,—

"Is it possible that the contents of this may be of any use to my son in his present dangerous position? Oh, Signor! if so, surely it cannot be wrong to open it.

I feel a strange confidence in you and this sweet lady, and I would act as you advise."

Mr. Aubrey knew his brother's handwriting, and, exclaiming "No, it is not wrong!" he hastily tore off the cover, and found a letter addressed to himself, or, in case of his death, to his son Reginald. In this letter Marcus gave an account of his life, from the time when he had so rashly quitted his family and his native land; and, after entreating the forgiveness of his favourite brother Charles, he implored his love and protection for his wife and his son, and confided them to his care, in the full conviction that he would ensure their restitution to the same position to which they would have been entitled if he had himself laid claim to his own name and inheritance. He added that, so long as his father lived, nothing would have induced him to return to England, and he had not then heard of his death; but he had desired his agent in London—the only individual who was aware of his place of residence, and his assumed name—to write to him whenever that event took place; when, if he yet lived, he would return and make himself known to his brothers; or, if he should have sunk under his trials and disappointments, his son might yet have justice done to him. In the warmest terms he spoke of his Isidora's virtues, and of her faithful and devoted love, and he charged his brother to be a brother to her.

Rapidly, and with much emotion, Charles Aubrey

read this letter, while both his wife and Signora Griffi watched his face with the deepest interest. As soon as he had finished it, he rose, and, laying it before the Signora, he took her trembling hand in both his own, and said,—

"Read that, Isidora, and you will know that what my wife yesterday more than suspected is indeed true. Your husband was my much loved brother, Marcus Aubrey. For many years after he left his country, I sought him, and used every possible means to discover him; but in vain. Still I have never altogether relinquished the hope; and I thank God that, though I cannot look again on his dear face, I may yet show brotherly kindness to his widow, and possibly save the life of his son. May the Lord, of His great mercy, grant me that blessing!"

At first, Signora Griffi seemed unable to comprehend what Mr. Aubrey meant; but gradually the truth dawned on her mind, and unspeakable joy beamed in her lustrous eyes.

"Holy Mary!" she cried, as she sank on her knees, and gazed devoutly at an image of the Virgin that stood in a niche of the wall—"Holy Mary! thou in whom I have put my trust; I bless thee, that thou hast heard my prayers, and raised up friends for my son!"

Then she rose, and embraced her newly-found sister-in-law with a warmth of grateful affection, that was

sincerely returned. When the agitation of this sudden recognition had somewhat subsided, Mr. Aubrey proceeded to detail to the anxious mother all his schemes for the liberation of Marco, in which he now felt such an increased interest, but of the accomplishment of which he could not entertain any very sanguine hopes. Long they conversed on the all-engrossing subject; and during their conference, Isabel and Juana entered the apartment, having heard that Mrs. Aubrey was there. The blind child immediately crept up to her, and, placing a sweet nosegay on her knee, she took her haud and held it fondly in both her own, while her gentle face and soft blue eyes were turned upwards, and she listened to the explanation that the English lady was giving to Isabel of all the recent and interesting discoveries that had been made.

The thoughts of Isabel, like those of Signora Griffi, immediately reverted to the influence which these discoveries might have on the fate of Marco; and both Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey saw enough of eager solicitude on the subject in her look and manners, to convince them that her happiness was as much bound up in his preservation as even his mother's could be. In her heart, Mrs. Aubrey now regretted this evident attachment, which she could not doubt was mutual: but she did not express that regret even to her husband, as they returned to Florence; for she hoped that whatever impression had been made on Kate would now be

effaced, and give place to such a cousinly affection as would enable her to rejoice in Marco's happiness—if, indeed, he were permitted to live and enjoy it.

Great was the surprise and excitement of the three young people, when they heard from their parents of the near relationship that existed between them and the Griffis; and many were the thoughts and feelings which arose in the breasts of Kate and Reginald, as Mrs. Aubrey alluded to the feelings which Isabel had betrayed.

"So, Marco is my cousin!" said Kate, as she took up one of his drawings, and went to the window to examine the artistic touch.

"He must be a fine fellow," said Reginald, drawing a long breath. "If I could save his life at the sacrifice of my own, I almost feel as if I would do it for that lovely girl's sake. I will be a brother to him and to her."

No one but his mother heard that last sentence, and it told her a secret that she had not before suspected, and added to her regret at what she had seen in Isabel's manner; but she looked at her son's fine countenance, in which firmness and calm resignation had already taken the place of disappointment, and she felt that this trial, like every other, would he blessed to him.

CHAPTER XIII.

In a damp and gloomy cell, in one of the state prisons at Milan, seven or eight men were crowded together, whose dress, though much disordered, showed them to be of the upper class of society. They were almost all young men in the prime of life, and some of them were of a very distinguished appearance; but an air of gloom, if not of despondency, might be traced on almost all their countenances, and only two of the number seemed to bear their misfortunes with cheerfulness. These two were standing near the grated opening that admitted all the light and air that was vouchsafed to these unfortunate men, and the rays of the midday sun fell strongly on their features.

One of them was considerably above the middle height, and his graceful but muscular frame seemed ill-adapted to a life of dull inaction within prison walls. His raven hair and short black beard set off a countenance of singular beauty and noble aspect; and his large dark eyes were, as he spoke, sometimes lighted up with the fire of an eagle's, and sometimes softened with an expression of the gentlest feeling.

His companion was of less lofty stature, and appeared to have suffered more from the confinement and privation to which they had been subjected; but his countenance expressed a calm resignation, very different from the defiant spirit that reigned in that of his friend, and which gave him rather the appearance of a suffering martyr than of an imprisoned rebel. He, too, was young, and his features were regular and pleasing; but there was something in his face more attractive than beauty, and on which the eyes of all who loved goodness delighted to dwell. It was the expression of unaffected, earnest piety.

"Griffi," said he to his companion, as he laid his hand upon his arm; "it is in vain now to dream of pardon and release. We are in the power of those who have long looked on us as deadly enemies, and sought our ruin. They will never resign their prey, now that they have at length secured it. Let us banish from our minds all visions of future heroic deeds, and only seek to prepare ourselves for the fate that awaits us."

"I know what you mean, Pietro," answered Griffi." "I know well that you deem me unfit to leave this world, and enter on another state of being; and you may be right. Sometimes I have almost envied you your confident assurance that *there is another world;* but I cannot share it. Science and art have been the objects of my worship; and I believe that the Maker of all things, who gave me my tastes and feelings, is

too merciful to punish me for exercising them. If there is indeed another world prepared for us poor mortals, I believe that I shall play my part in it as well as others."

An expression of pain contracted the open brow of Pietro, and he looked deprecatingly in the face of his friend.

"Oh, Marco," he said, "this is not a time for such profane reasonings! Would to God I could move you to lay aside your vain philosophy, and listen to the words of truth, even from me. You have lived in the neglect of religion; but do not, I beseech you, do not die in that neglect!"

"What have I ever seen of religion to make it attractive to me, except indeed in you, my friend, and in Isabel Anzilotti? I believe she holds the same belief that you do, and her life, like yours, is a favourable comment upon her faith, for it is as pure as that of an angel. But how can a man of sense look round upon all the folly, and superstition, and bigotry that disgrace our native land, and consent to bow down his spirit to such degradation, and call it *religion?* My religion consists in endeavouring to do my duty, and to act as a man of honour. If I have hitherto succeeded in this, I have no fears for the future."

"You have succeeded, Marco. You have been the most devoted son, the most faithful friend, and the most ardent and self-sacrificing lover of your country.

But can all that atone for sin? No, believe me, Marco, the soul must have some stronger stay to rest upon in the hour of death than the remembrance of these virtues, however estimable they may be. I would that you would look to that Saviour who can alone redeem you from merited perdition. I would that you could be persuaded to consult that blessed Book which you have told me was your father's only comfort in his dying hour!"

"My poor father changed his religion more than once. How could I know that he had found the right one? And my mother—my dear, excellent mother, is a Catholic, and believes in all the doctrines and observances of the priests. Is she in vital error? Your wife, too, Ruffini, holds the same doctrines to be true; and she is good and virtuous, even as Isabel is, yet what evil has her religion brought about? What then is truth? I have never found it yet on earth: perhaps we shall both be enlightened ere long."

The reply of Pietro was prevented by the entrance of the gaoler, who approached him, and, informing him that his presence was required in the adjoining cell, led him immediately away.

"May the Lord bless you, and give you his true light before it is too late, for the sake of his blessed Son!" was his parting benediction to Marco. Then the gaoler pulled him roughly into the passage, and the heavy door was closed again. One shrill cry reached

the ears of the prisoners, and a sound as of something falling heavily on the floor,—and then all was silent. Marco thought he recognised the voice as that of Rosa Ruffini; and the cry of agony long rang in his ears, and his heart ached for his friend, whose doom had been hastened, if not caused, by the wife whom he so dearly loved.

That broken-hearted wife was now clinging to her husband's breast, and with bitter tears and sobs imploring his forgiveness, and bewailing the affliction which her imprudence had occasioned.

"Pietro!" she cried; "could I have believed that Father Bernardo was deceiving me? He appeared to share all your hopes and feelings, and to desire the success of your schemes. I even thought he knew them, so artfully did he suggest the very things which I had heard from you and Marco. Oh, he was always so good and so compassionate, and he pitied you, and prayed for you that your eyes might be opened to see your errors! I thought he loved you, Pietro; and all the while he was contriving your destruction, and making me—your own poor wife, his instrument. I cannot forgive him, and yet it was he who brought me hither, and it was he who obtained permission for me to enter the prison, and to remain in Milan, and see you daily until your trial is over. For this I will still bless him."

"Yes, and forgive him too, Rosa, even for all the

evil that he has brought on me and my brave comrades," said Pietro, gently placing his trembling wife on the bench beside him, and drawing her close to his heart. "We will both forgive him, love, remembering that our affliction comes from the Lord, our merciful God, though Bernardo has been the means of bringing it to pass. Let us leave all vengeance to Him to whom it belongeth, and only strive to submit ourselves to His will, who can make all things work together for good to those who love Him."

"Pietro, if you had injured Father Bernardo as he has injured you, I fear he would not have thus freely forgiven you. No, even though he is a minister of peace, and you are a soldier. He spoke gently to me, and seemed to pity me in my deep distress when I first heard of your imprisonment, and charged him with having betrayed my confidence. But though he attempted to deny it, I knew he was deceiving me; and though he expressed sorrow for your perilous position, and tried to cheer me with words of hope, I saw that there was bitterness in his heart towards you and Marco, and I could not trust in his sympathy. Oh, Pietro, my husband! would that I had never trusted in him!"

Pietro again sought to calm his poor agonised wife with words of tenderness and consolation; but the more gently and affectionately he spoke, the more poignantly did she seem to feel her grief and self-reproach.

"It is I who have ruined you, my Pietro!" she cried. "I who have been the object of your heart's best affections, and who have loved you more than my poor words can tell; and I thought I was only doing my duty. Bernardo said it would be a mortal sin in me not to confess to him, my spiritual father, every thought of my heart, and everything that had come to my knowledge. Could it be my duty? And if it were so, could Father Bernardo be right in revealing it to the police? Oh, it is hard—very hard, to know what is right, when conscience tells us one thing, and our religious guides tell us another."

"There is a guide, Rosa, that can never deceive us. We have the Word of God; and if we make that the guide of our life, we cannot go fatally astray. I always hoped and prayed, love, that I might live to be the means of leading you to search that Word, and renounce all other directors of your conscience. I trusted that ere long we should be united in faith as we were in mind and affection. Perhaps I had no right to hope it."

"Pietro, if anything could have led me to change the religion in which I was brought up, it would have been living with you, and seeing your daily life, and knowing how every word and action, yes, and I believe every thought, was governed by higher motives than those which actuate most men. I have often felt that your faith must be the right one, but I deemed it sin-

to entertain such a feeling, and ever since I confessed it Father Bernardo has been more harsh to me, and his questions have been more searching. My soul has been much tried, Pietro, and I am very weak. I never was worthy to be your wife. Why did you unite yourself to one so inferior, and one who has now wrought your destruction?"

"Dearest Rosa, do not torture yourself and me by these vain thoughts! If I erred in uniting myself to one whom I had loved from a child, and who was all that my heart could wish on every point but one,—may God forgive me! I trusted that your innate love of truth would compel you to open your eyes, and see the right way, and follow it. Could I still hope that such would be the case, and that even my death would be the means of effecting the blessed change, I should not regret my untimely end; and I should bless God for having permitted us to spend together one short year of such perfect happiness as we have enjoyed."

For one brief hour this conversation was continued, and then Rosa was led from the cell, and Ruffini was left alone. He was not again taken to the apartment where the rest of his comrades were confined, and they remained ignorant of his fate for many days, and even feared that he had already, as one of the chief leaders of the conspiracy, expiated his patriotism on the scaffold. But he was detained in his solitary cell in the hope that his life might be made more useful to

the schemes of tyranny than his immediate death would have been.

It was not compassion for the feelings of a broken-hearted wife that caused the civil magistrates to permit Rosa's daily entrance to her husband's cell, nor was it pity for Pietro's impending doom that led Father Bernardo to obtain for the captive heretic the indulgence of soothing that wife's anguish, and the opportunity of endeavouring to lead her to place her confidence where alone it could never fail her.

No; the magistrates and the monk had other objects, and Pietro soon discovered them. When a few more days had elapsed, he found that Rosa spoke much more sanguinely of his ultimate release, and seemed to dread the result of his approaching trial much less. She led him to speak of the conspiracy which had so sadly failed, and of all the aid that had been looked for from other quarters, and which had not arrived in time. The subject was interesting to Ruffini, and he spoke unguardedly, until something of earnestness in Rosa's manner struck him forcibly, and the truth flashed across his mind.

"Rosa!" he exclaimed, and the indignant blood flushed his very brow, "Rosa,—my wife,—can it be that these men have tampered with you, and sought to gain information through you, which they may use for the destruction of our friends, and the ruin of all our hopes for the future? I could forgive them for making

your misplaced confidence in a priest the means of compassing my death; but I cannot forgive them if they are plotting to make me, even unconsciously, act a traitor's part,—and that through you, my Rosa."

Pietro leant his head upon his hands, and covered his face; and his wretched wife gazed upon him in silence until she saw drops of shame and agony trickle slowly through his compressed fingers. Then she threw her arms around him, and cried,—

"Forgive me! Oh, forgive me! They offered me your life, Pietro. Father Bernardo promised me that not one hair of your precious head should suffer, if I could only learn from you the names of the rest of the conspirators. I knew you would never reveal them if you guessed the object they had in view, no, not even to save your life, and mine too, Pietro, for I cannot live without you. But I knew you would never betray your comrades, and so I tried to get the information I wanted without exciting your suspicion. I am punished, my love. That look of bitter anguish has shown me, that death with honour is better for you than life with shame. Bernardo shall learn nothing from me; and, if they kill me, I will bless them, my husband, if they will only let me die with you."

Pietro looked up in his wife's face with an expression of radiant joy and gratitude; and, embracing her fondly, he exclaimed,—

"Now I shall die happy! Now I shall be able to

meet my fate, come when it may, and be it what it will, with head erect, and countenance unabashed. Let the shame be on those who have tried such unworthy means of ruining brave men! My Rosa will not be their tool!"

"Never, Pietro, never more," sobbed his wife, as she raised her head from his shoulder, and looked proudly in his face; "I feel now that I would rather mourn your death, than see you live, feeling yourself dishonoured. It was selfishness that led me to listen to the temptation. I ought to have known that life would be no boon to you, my noble husband, if the slightest stain rested on your character; or if that life were to be prolonged by the sacrifice of others. Pietro, I have no hope now of saving you. But I shall not long survive you. *O Maria sanctissima, ora pro nobis!*"

Rosa knelt by her husband's side, and covering her face with her hands, rested it upon his knee; while, in the manner which had been familiar to her from childhood, she rapidly repeated her prayers to the Virgin.

"Let us pray to Mary's son, and Mary's Lord and Saviour," said Pietro solemnly. And, kneeling beside his wife, he offered up a simple but fervent prayer,—so full of faith and resignation, and yet so animated with lively hope, that Rosa's spirit was cheered and elevated; and she felt that such petitions must be heard and answered.

Days passed slowly away, and at length the trial of

the prisoners commenced. The details of its proceedings need not be described; suffice it to say, it was carried on in a manner very different to that which marks the course of justice in England; and the accused soon perceived that their condemnation was determined on, even before the forms of trial had commenced. Day after day Rosa heard from her husband what had occurred in the court of *justice*, and day by day the last rays of lingering hope died out. Yes, all hope for happiness in this world expired; but there were better and surer hopes that now sprang up in Rosa's breast, and enabled her to endure the present, and look cheerfully to the future. Pietro's prayers were heard, and Pietro's example had power to convince her of the excellency of his faith; and the words of eternal life, which he had kept in the storehouse of his memory, and oft repeated to his wife, brought light, and peace, and joy to her soul. There were times when her spirit seemed broken within her, and all hope was taken away; but those were the hours that she passed in solitude, or when Bernardo sought her out, and renewed his arguments and his temptations. She did not tell him all that was in her heart, nor express her present feeling of scorn for all his propositions; for she feared that if he knew no hope remained of his vile purpose being accomplished, and of Pietro being led to betray his confederates, her daily visit to the prison would be prohibited.

Confinement and privation did their work on the bodily frame of Pietro Ruffini; but his spirit never quailed; even at the prospect of a near and violent death, and at the sight of his beloved wife's extremity of grief, which she sometimes vainly strove to hide, his fortitude was unshaken. Surely of all the heaven-born qualities that have survived the fall,—to show the dignity of our primeval nature, and to illuminate the darkness of our present degraded state,—*fortitude* seems to claim the first place in our estimation. Even as a merely natural gift, it at once ennobles its possessor, and stamps him, whatever may be his rank or social condition, as one of nature's aristocracy. But when this noble quality is sanctified by spiritual motives—when it is strengthened by faith, purified by love, and grounded on an entire trust in God's mercy and wisdom—when it is fortitude to endure suffering—fortitude to resist and conquer temptation—fortitude to overcome every obstacle, either from enemies without, or infirmity within, and to persevere undaunted to the end—then, indeed, it becomes almost sublime, and assimilates the character of him in whom it dwells to that of our Divine Exemplar. Well might heathen nations erect a statue to fortitude; and well may Christians pray for the noble gift, and strive to cultivate and improve it, in a better spirit than the heathen ever knew of. This fortitude is not merely a passive endurance—insensibility may produce that; nor is it

a proud self-reliance, that would defy the power of outward events and circumstances to shake its upright position. No; the fortitude of which we speak is a stedfastness of purpose—a strength of will and resolution to meet inevitable evils with composure, and to maintain the dignity with which God has endowed His immortal creatures—not for their own glory, but for the glory of Him in whose hands are all events, and who disposes of all according to His unerring wisdom and infinite goodness.

It was this grand quality that now supported Pietro Ruffini, and excited the respect and admiration even of his bitterest enemies. But it did not inspire them with mercy. Rather the contrary; for his judges felt that such a man was only too well calculated to influence his fellow-creatures, and to lead them whither he would; and they were resolved that he should never again have power to inspire them with a love of liberty, and a hatred of tyranny. His condemnation was therefore pronounced, and also that of Marco Griffi, and several of their comrades. But sentence of death was only uttered against the two principal leaders, while banishment and imprisonment were the penalties to be inflicted on all the rest.

Rosa knew from Father Bernardo that the trial—or rather the mockery of a trial—would be finished that day, and the doom of the prisoners made known; and the monk again assured her that even now it rested

with her husband to escape the execution of his sentence, whatever that might be, by pronouncing a few words. Rosa turned away sick at heart, and she made no reply; but the monk saw her whole frame quiver, and marked her faltering steps, as he walked by her side to the prison-gate; and he doubted not that she would use all her eloquence to overcome her husband's obstinacy, even at the last hour. He left her as the heavy door opened to admit her, audibly asking a blessing on her pious errand; and Rosa hurried to Pietro's cell. She had often declared to him and to herself that she had no longer the slightest hope of his being pardoned, or even of his life being spared. But hope will linger even when we know it not; and the intense anxiety which the poor young wife now experienced, showed her that she had not taught herself to anticipate the worst so decidedly as she had imagined. Her trembling limbs could scarcely bear her along the passage; and the turnkey, all used as he was to the sight of human misery, seemed to feel compassion towards her, and gave her the support of his arm to the door of the cell.

She entered; and one glance told her that all hope was indeed now gone. For a short time, all her courage gave way, and she wept with uncontrolled anguish; while her husband, who felt for her what he could not feel for himself, sought to strengthen and to calm her. He was weak with fatigue and watching; for the trial

had been carried on all through the night, and the prisoners had been kept without rest or refreshment ever since the previous afternoon. But it was beautiful to see how the high and holy spirit within supported the now feeble frame of the young soldier, and made him triumph over the weakness of the flesh. Never had Rosa heard him speak such words of power, or utter such fervent and eloquent prayers, as on this day, when he felt that it was the last time he should thus hold spiritual communion with his beloved wife on earth.

Gradually a heavenly composure succeeded to Rosa's agony of grief, and she was able to converse with her husband, and listen to his directions for her future life.

"In Isabel Anzilotti," he said, "you will ever find support and comfort; and she will strengthen you in those views and principles which have already become precious to your soul. Let her be, as she has been for years, your chosen friend and companion; and when you weep together for those whom you have loved and lost—then, Rosa, let me beseech you to seek together for consolation, not where you have been taught to look for it—from human beings like yourselves—but at the fountain of all consolation—the blessed Word of God. I bequeath to you my precious copy of that Word, which you know is concealed in the secret closet in our dear home,"—his lip quivered as he said that word;—"keep it, love, as your best treasure, and think of me when you read its sacred pages."

"I will, Pietro, I will!" exclaimed his wife; "but it will not be for long. God grant I may be prepared to follow you to the enduring home to which you are going! There will be no more partings in that bright world. But, oh! my husband, how shall I bear being separated from you in the hour of your death, and knowing that that death is one of violence? I could have nursed you in sickness, and watched you in your dying hour, and felt your parting breath upon my cheek; and, knowing that all pain and sorrow had ceased for you for ever, I could have blessed God, and waited for the happy moment of our eternal reunion—not happily—not perhaps even tranquilly—but with thankfulness that, if one was to be left alone on earth, you were spared the utter desolation that must be my lot without you. Yes, Pietro, I feel that, since I have learnt a better faith from you, I could have borne all this, and possibly have lived. But I cannot bear what is coming. The stroke that lays you low will be my death-blow too."

"Say not so, my Rosa; the Lord, who now supports me in the prospect of death, and of our separation, is able to bring comfort even to your bereaved heart, and to give you grace and strength to serve and glorify him by a life of usefulness. Yet, should it please him shortly to release you from what I well know will be a state of lonely sadness, I feel sure you would be enabled to meet death as a friend; for you have learnt

to trust entirely in Him who, for our sakes, endured and overcame death. Never let your faith in Him be shaken. Never suffer yourself to be drawn back into the superstitions from which, I thank God, your soul is now freed. And fear not, Rosa; we shall meet again, never to part. The time of our separation cannot be long, and in eternity we shall forget its sadness."

When the hour that was permitted to Rosa to spend in her husband's cell had expired, the turnkey came as usual to conduct her from the prison. She did not know that it was for the last time, and she spoke of returning on the morrow. But Ruffini knew that before to-morrow's noon his spirit would have left its earthly tenement, and be in the presence of his Saviour. It was hard to keep this knowledge from his wife, and to part as if they were to meet again in this world. But Pietro kept down the strong emotion of his manly, loving heart, and the heavy door was closed and locked before he gave way to his natural feelings.

During the trial, all the prisoners had been brought together before their judges. Pietro had therefore seen Marco Griffi and his other unfortunate friends, and had been able to exchange glances of encouragement and mutual affection, though no other intercourse had been permitted between them. The fatal sentence was pronounced in the presence of all; and therefore they all knew which two of their number were fated to meet once more within those prison-walls, and to draw their

last breath side by side. How fervently had Ruffini prayed for his friend during the long hours of his own solitary imprisonment! And now that he knew Marco's fate was sealed as well as his own, what would he not have endured to be assured that, when they parted on the morrow, their separation would not be eternal! But Griffi's mind had from youth been strongly imbued with the infidel and materialist doctrines so general both in Italy and other parts of the Continent, where a disgust for the superstition which they see around them drives many intelligent men to scepticism; and hitherto no arguments that Pietro could use —no, nor even his pious example—had availed to bring his friend to receive the truths of revelation, or to seek his rule of faith and conduct in the holy Word of God.

No wonder, then, that he dreaded a sudden and unprepared death for that much-loved friend, or that some of his last hours were passed in supplications at the throne of grace, in which Marco's name was oft repeated; and we know where it is written that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

At daybreak there was a stir within the prison-walls, and a file of soldiers entered the gates, and took their station on one side of the central court-yard. Soon afterwards two men were led forth, and placed on the other side of the court, opposite to the soldiers. Their eyes were bandaged, and they could not look upon each

other's countenances in this last awful moment; and their arms were pinioned behind their backs. Two ecclesiastics attended the prisoners,—one a monk, in the habit of the Dominicans, and the other a priest. But their earnest exhortations did not seem to be much heeded by the victims, who appeared to be so absorbed in their own reflections, that the words of the confessors made as little impression on their deadened ears as the crucifixes which they held up before them did on their bandaged eyes.

They took their stations at some paces apart—both calm and erect. The signal was given—a sharp report followed; and one of those two brave patriots lay lifeless on the ground, while the other remained standing upright and uninjured. That report reached the ears of poor Rosa Ruffini, in her lodging near the prison, and awoke her from a brief and restless slumber, into which she had fallen towards daybreak. She started up with a shrill, wild cry; for the awful truth flashed across her agitated mind, and her brain felt scorched as by fire. She would have left the room, and fled to the prison to know the worst; but her failing limbs refused to support her, and she sank on the ground senseless. From this blessed state of unconsciousness she was at length aroused by the efforts of the kind and compassionate woman with whom she lodged; and the first object that met her bewildered gaze was Father Bernardo, kneeling by her side, and holding before her

the same crucifix which he had so lately borne before her husband.

"Go!" she shrieked, in accents of horror; and she strove to repulse him with her feeble hands. "Go from my sight! You have murdered him! My husband, my Pietro, I follow you! Lord Jesus, receive my sinful soul!"

As she spoke, she again stretched forth her arms, and endeavoured to rise; but nature was exhausted. The motive which had hitherto supported her, and enabled her to endure her killing grief with something like resignation, was now taken away, and no tie to life was left her. For some time she remained silent and motionless; and Bernardo, believing that her spirit was already passing away, commenced the prayers for the dying, and prepared to perform the rite of extreme unction. But once more those fading eyes were opened, and the quivering lips moved softly.

"I die in the faith of my husband," was uttered in an audible whisper. They were her last words; and before the hour arrived at which Rosa Ruffini had hoped again to visit her beloved husband in the dark prison, her spirit, like his, was released from all earthly bonds, and had winged its way to the presence of her God and Saviour, never more to part from him whom she had so dearly loved.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE weather at Florence was hot and sultry, and Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey began to feel the necessity of removing to a more bracing climate. For Kate's sake this step seemed especially desirable; for ever since the day when she became acquainted with the family at the Villa Anzilotti, her health and spirits had gradually declined. None of her favourite pursuits appeared any longer to interest her. Her pencils were laid aside; and if music was ever her chosen occupation, it was only in a wild and desultory way that she played some touching airs, the sound of which did anything but cheer her.

Mrs. Aubrey no longer concealed from her husband the suspicions she had so long entertained with respect to Kate's feelings towards her cousin Marco; and they agreed that the best remedy for such an unhappy attachment would be entire change of scene.

Reginald also had lost much of his usually cheerful spirits; and, though he showed his depression less plainly than his sister did, it was but too evident that his visit to Florence had been productive of a very

different result from that which his parents either desired or anticipated.

Preparations were therefore made for removing to Geneva, where the Aubreys proposed to remain during the heat of the summer months, making excursions to the spots of greatest beauty and interest among the mountains; and to return to Florence towards the autumn.

All the party were grieved at the prospect of leaving Signora Griffi and her adopted daughters in their present state of distress and anxiety; and Reginald's countenance visibly fell when leaving Florence was decided upon. But he did not oppose the decision, for he knew that flight was the best, the only course, for him; and he resolved to return to England for a few weeks, and endeavour, amidst his own parochial avocations, to banish from his mind the image of one who could never be anything to him but the wife of his more fortunate cousin.

For that cousin's life he had, in concert with his father, striven earnestly and generously; and many times their hopes had been raised that the fact of his English parentage might be admitted as a plea for his pardon, or at least for the remission of the capital punishment which would otherwise be the penalty of his offence. But no promise was ever extorted from those in authority, even by the remonstrances of several friends of Mr. Aubrey's, who then held a share in the English Government.

Day after day Mrs. Aubrey repaired to the villa, to tell her sister-in-law what progress was being made; and day by day she saw that Isidora's hopes became fainter, and that the lines which sorrow and anxiety had made in her still beautiful countenance became more strongly marked. Ethel generally accompanied her to the villa, for she had become much attached to Isabel; and she took great interest in instructing the gentle blind child, and endeavouring to cheer her under the heavy trial that had fallen upon them. Juana spoke continually of her "brother Marco," and always in terms of the highest praise; and she told Ethel of all he had said of his English pupils, when first he had become acquainted with the Aubreys. It might have given Kate pleasure to have heard some of her drawing-master's remarks, repeated thus innocently by the child; but Ethel feared to deepen an impression which she well knew was already a source of sorrow, and even of self-reproach to her sister; and therefore, no one knew what passed between her and her little pupil when they were alone. To Isabel she never spoke of Marco, except with reference to her father's efforts for his deliverance. She saw that the spirit of the young Italian was crushed, and she could not doubt the cause.

Kate and Reginald seldom went to the villa; and when they did so, it was not with their mother and sister, but they two alone. And then Kate would sit

on a low stool by her "Aunt Isidora's" side, and lead her to talk of her noble son, until both of them forgot how time was passing. And Reginald would give way —very imprudently, no doubt—to the fascination of the moment, and persuade Isabel to sing some of her favourite songs, while he attempted to take Marco's part in several of them. And such was the power of melody on the soul of the Italian girl, that so long as her voice was joined in concert with Reginald's rich tenor, her habitual sadness seemed to be banished, and her fine features were again radiant with animation.

It was very seldom, however, that either the brother or sister permitted themselves this dangerous indulgence. They did not assign to one another any reason for their conduct; but each had divined the other's secret, and each respected it, and sympathised in the sorrow that was so inevitably linked with it: and therefore their walks and rides were generally in some direction that did not lead to the Villa Anzilotti.

Herbert Goodwin had accompanied his master to Italy, and proved himself a useful and a trusty page. He constantly accompanied the party when they went excursions in the neighbourhood, and he was well known as Reginald's private domestic. Might he not be made useful by the watchful police of Florence? Might not some information be gained from him which would influence the result of Signor Griffi's trial? Apparently it was believed that such might be the

case; for the English youth found himself frequently an object of curiosity; and sometimes when he was sent alone on an errand through the city, he fancied he was followed and watched.

At length he was accosted by a monk, whose features were almost concealed by his overhanging hood, and who, to his great surprise, spoke very intelligible English. His manner was friendly, and his pretence for addressing Herbert was so simple, that at first he suspected no sinister object. But the monk continued to walk by his side, and to make inquiries respecting the family whom he served, and the position which they held in their own country, and even their political opinions, which both surprised and annoyed the page, though he saw no reason for not replying frankly as far as his knowledge extended, and he felt an honest pride in exalting the rank and consideration of his patrons to the height which he felt they deserved.

Then the wily monk spoke of Signor Griffi, and betrayed an intimate acquaintance with the interest that was felt for him by the Aubreys, and the efforts they were making in his favour. But here he found the young man less communicative. Herbert knew the relationship that existed between his master and Signor Griffi, for it had been spoken of openly in his presence; and he knew also that Marco's imprisonment had been brought about by the treachery of a Dominican confessor; and he feared the use that might be

made of any indiscretion on his part. He therefore parried the remarks and insinuations of the monk with considerable dexterity, and tried, but in vain, to rid himself of his company. The Dominican still kept by his side, and spoke in praise of Marco Griffi, and lamented the sad and untimely fate that awaited him, if his trial were allowed to proceed, and his friends were unsuccessful in obtaining his pardon.

"It might be effected," said the monk, glancing furtively at Herbert's open English countenance, "it might easily be effected, if those who have influence with Signor Griffi could persuade him to make a candid avowal of the plans which he and his associates intended to have accomplished. The Government desires to be very merciful to her misguided sons, and only requires such a knowledge of their revolutionary schemes as may enable her to prevent their again rushing into ruin and destruction. If you are a faithful servant to Signor Aubrey, you will tell him that the best and kindest thing he can do for his captive friend, is to induce him to reply ingenuously to the questions of his examiners. Hitherto he has refused to do so; and Ruffini and all his comrades have followed his example. But it is not yet too late. I return to Milan to-morrow evening, and I will gladly convey any letter to the unfortunate prisoner which Signor Aubrey will confide to me." Then leaning towards Herbert, he whispered in his ear: "If I am

not mistaken, one of the Signorinas would be better able to win Marco Griffi to our will than any one else. Tell her so, young man. It is she with the sunny hair and large brown eyes, and who talks so freely of liberty and rebellion. I guess those eyes have power over Signor Griffi; and if the lady were to write to him, all might yet be well."

There was an expression of malice, and yet of amusement, on the half-hidden features of the monk, and a mocking tone in his low voice, that made the English lad feel inclined to knock him down. But prudence enabled him to conquer his indignation, and to reply with calmness,—

"Signor monk, if you have anything to say to my master, or to Mr. Aubrey, which can help them in obtaining the liberty of Signor Griffi, I shall be happy to conduct you into their presence. My young ladies are not in the habit of writing letters to gentlemen; and I know nothing of the colour of Miss Catherine's eyes. Have you any further message for me to take?"

"You are hasty, young man," replied the monk, in a less offensive tone, for he saw that he should gain nothing by his insinuations. "Tell your master what I have said respecting a free avowal on the part of Griffi; and add, if you please, that I speak with authority. I will be in the *Piazza del Gran Duca*, near the great fountain, at sunset to-morrow; and if Signor Aubrey has anything to commit to my charge, I will

faithfully deliver it to the prisoner. I have free access to his place of confinement at all times, and deeds of mercy are my vocation."

Herbert thought that the keen eyes of the Dominican were expressive of other sentiments than mercy and benevolence, as he turned away with a parting salutation, and was soon hidden from his eyes beneath the shadow of an open porch. The youth hastened back to his master, and repeated to him all that the monk had said, with the exception of his remarks respecting his sister. That part of the conversation he kept to himself; for he well knew how much it would offend Reginald, and his attachment to him was so great that he would not willingly wound his feelings, even in the slightest degree. But his own indignation had by no means subsided; and he begged that he might be allowed to meet the monk the following evening, and deliver to him the reply, which he was sure both his master and Mr. Aubrey would send to such a treacherous proposal.

This was agreed to, and the youth was charged with a message, couched in temperate, but very decided terms, and declining to use any means for the liberation of Signor Griffi, but such as would be strictly consistent with his honour.

Herbert repaired to the Piazza at the appointed time, and took his station by the fine old fountain; and immediately, from behind one of the columns that support

the entrance to the Uffizzi, glided forth the shrouded monk. He approached the young man, and said,—

"Has your master listened to the voice of truth and of mercy? Has he lent his aid towards the liberation of the wretched captive? I fear this is his only chance?"

"Mr. Aubrey and Mr. Reginald Aubrey have desired me to tell you that they hope to effect Signor Griffi's release by means which he would himself approve of. They would not ask him to betray his friends; and they know that he would never even listen to such a proposal. They thank you for your offer of conveying a letter to the noble prisoner, but they will not give you that trouble."

The English lad looked with something like triumph, mingled with contempt, at the discomfited monk, whose face was now lighted up by the setting sun, his hood having partially fallen back as he hurried from his place of concealment.

A very malignant expression lurked in those sunken eyes; and the thin lips were compressed for a moment, as Bernardo—for it was he—meditated on his course of action. Then he glanced stealthily at Herbert—he could not look straightforward into his clear, dauntless eyes—and said slowly,—

"I greatly admire, and entirely understand, your master's motives. I know more of their relationship to Marco Griffi than they perhaps suppose. I know that he is the son of Signor Aubrey's elder brother,

and that, if he lives to establish his claim, he will, by your English law, become possessed of the family estates and honours; and your young master will lose what he has looked on as his birthright. No wonder, then, that they feel so averse to adopting my plan for Griffi's release from captivity! No wonder they deem it better for him and for themselves that he should die a rebel's death, rather than obtain a full pardon by giving up the names of other rebels. Young man, I say again, I admire the honourable feelings of these noble Englishmen!"

Possibly Herbert's wrath would now have broken forth in some act of violence, but before he could collect his thoughts, the monk had disappeared within the portico, and he was left alone by the fountain.

When he returned home, he told Reginald all that had passed between him and the Dominican; and so strongly was he now convinced of the evil feelings which Bernardo entertained towards his master's family, that he thought it right to repeat to him also the remarks concerning Kate, and her unguarded expressions in favour of political liberty, which had been made to him the previous day. Reginald questioned her on the subject; and she told him of the circumstance that had occurred in the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella, when she and Signor Griffi were conversing in English, and the confessor had passed them twice. It was now clear that the monk who had questioned Herbert so closely was the same individual, and that he understood

the English language perfectly: and it was a very painful thought to Kate, that possibly her imprudence in thus expressing her own feelings, and calling forth those of Marco, had partly led to his arrest and imprisonment.

Mr. Aubrey was informed of what had passed; and though he did not attach any great importance to it, yet he felt that it was an additional reason for hastening his departure from Florence, where even his daughter's sex and station as an English lady, might not screen her from very unpleasant interference on the part of the Government, if she were suspected of encouraging revolutionary principles in the subjects over whom it ruled with a rod of iron.

He would gladly have remained in the city until it could be ascertained whether his exertions in favour of Marco had been of any avail. But he well knew the tedious nature of Italian trials, and how month after month—even year after year—sometimes passed away, while the accused were kept in captivity and suspense. The health of his daughter also so evidently required some change of air and scene, that further delay would have been extremely imprudent. Preparations were therefore made, and an early day fixed for their departure. This measure appeared still more necessary to Mr. Aubrey when, the evening before their journey was to commence, on returning from a farewell visit to Signora Griffi, Herbert put a letter into his hand, saying he had received it from another monk in the Dominican

habit. Mr. Aubrey immediately opened it, and found it to be written in Italian, to the following effect :—

"A friend of Signora Griffi's, and one who loves mercy and truth, desires to warn you that your stay in Florence is no longer safe. The warm interest you have shown for the rebel Griffi, your near relationship to him, and your daughter's unguarded avowal of her own revolutionary sentiments, which are presumed to be shared by you and your son, have brought upon you the attention of those who do not love your nation. A few months of absence from the Tuscan dominions, and an entire cessation of all interference in the fate of those concerned in the late insurrection, are earnestly recommended."

Mr. Aubrey showed this mysterious letter to his son; and they questioned Herbert as to the person from whom he had received it. He said the Dominican was a perfect stranger to him, but he was quite sure that he was not the same individual with whom he had before conversed. He described him as a much older man, and of a singularly benign and venerable aspect. He made no attempt to hide his features, and merely presented him with the letter, pointing to the address, and making a sign that he understood no English, when Herbert addressed him in that language.

"Surely," said Reginald, "he must be Father Jerome, the monk who so frequently visits the Villa Anzilotti. I have met just such a venerable person more than

once as I approached the villa; and Isabel told me that he was my aunt Isidora's friend and confessor, and a man of such piety and worth, that she always felt inclined to love his religion for his sake. She said she had known him from a child; and that though he never attempted to interfere with the faith in which she and Juana were brought up, yet he had acted as their instructor in many branches of knowledge, and had shown by his conversation, and by his whole life and conduct, that he was influenced by motives of the purest and most exalted nature. I have often wished for his acquaintance, and when we return to Florence, I will endeavour to make it."

"Would to God that such men were to be found more frequently in every country, and belonging to every religion!" replied Mr. Aubrey. "They would do more to remove unjust prejudice and ill-feeling, than all the controversy that has ever been held between the opposing parties. One can only regret that this Dominican should shut himself up in a monastery, instead of letting his light—such as it is—'shine before men.' Possibly that light might then, by intercourse with other minds, be increased, and so 'shine more and more unto the perfect day' of pure gospel truth."

"But such liberality of mind as seems to characterise Father Jerome is, I fear, very rare among the ecclesiastics of this country," said Reginald. "Perhaps it is equally rare everywhere. Our plans are now so

arranged, that we need not alter them from the contents of the monk's letter. His intentions, however, seem to be truly friendly, and I should like him to know that we are grateful for his warning. Shall I ride back to the villa, and show the letter to Signora Griffi? She could identify the handwriting, and she could deliver a message to the kind old Jerome."

Were there no other motives that prompted Reginald to volunteer so eagerly a second ride to the villa? Perhaps he was not aware of them himself, or he might have had courage to refrain from again seeing the too fascinating Isabel before his departure from Florence. His father, however, divined his inward feelings, and smiled rather sorrowfully as he saw his son's heightened colour and eager eyes.

"No, my boy," he said, as he laid his hand on Reginald's arm; "all that will do as well when we return. Father Jerome—if, indeed, it is he—will know that we have acted according to his counsel, and that will satisfy him. We have all of us enough to do this evening; for we must start, you know, at break of day, in order to reach Pisa in good time."

Reginald felt that his father was right. Indeed, he followed the good old custom of generally thinking such to be the case, and experience only confirmed him in that opinion. So he silently followed him into the house, and, with Herbert's assistance, packed his portmanteaus with as much resignation as he could command.

CHAPTER XV.

THE Aubreys left *Firenze la bella* by the early train; and the weather seemed to sympathise in their depressed feelings; for a drizzling rain fell fast, and shrouded all the beauty of the city and its environs. At Pisa they paused for some hours, to hear the fine chanting at the cathedral service, and take another survey of the Campo Santo, which was new to Reginald. They reached Leghorn late in the afternoon, and immediately embarked in a vessel bound for Genoa, into which picturesque old port they entered the following morning, much cheered by the bright sunshine that lighted up its ancient castles and noble palaces.

Two open carriages conveyed them over the Appenines, by the pass of the *Giocchi*, to Busala; and the beauty and magnificence of the scenery was such as to beguile poor Kate of half her sorrowful and anxious feelings. Until this day, she had never beheld a real mountain-pass; and her wonder and admiration, as the road wound round the edge of fearful precipices, presenting each moment some new and glorious view, kept her silent and almost breathless.

At Busala they again found a train ready to carry them to Turin, where they were glad to rest for some days, after the excitement and fatigue of their rapid journey from Florence. The hotel where they had taken up their abode looked into the great square; and they were awakened soon after daybreak by the noise and stir beneath their windows. The square was already thronged by well-dressed persons, soldiers, ecclesiastics, artisans, and peasants of both sexes. It was the Sabbath-day, and this accounted for the holiday costumes of the gay multitude; but their early rising excited the wonder of the weary travellers, who would willingly have enjoyed their slumbers a little longer in the superb rooms, and clean, excellent beds, provided for them at the Hotel de l'Europe. But sleep was hopeless while the buzz of voices, and the frequent loud and merry laugh, rose up from the animated crowd beneath; so the young people arose by common consent, and walked out into the square, which is of large extent, and very handsome. Opposite to the hotel stands the royal palace, the architecture of which is rather grotesque, with its high-pitched roof, studded with innumerable small dormer windows, that have a very peculiar effect. In the centre of the square, a large, gloomy-looking building rises to a considerable height; and, on inquiring, Reginald was informed that it was the ancient palace of the queen, and now used as the repository of state papers and other valuables.

It was with much satisfaction that the English travellers found the Vaudois church opened for public service that morning; and they felt it a privilege to hear the gospel preached by the well-known Pastor, Bert, who was at that time residing at Turin. The dress and primitive appearance of the greater part of the congregation showed them to be natives of the mountains, and aroused the sympathy and interest of the Aubreys, to whom the sufferings and the undaunted heroism of their countrymen were so well known. In walking afterwards through the regular and well-built city, they observed a church, which they were told belonged especially to the Jesuits; and entering it, they found it highly decorated in honour of the "*Festa al cuore di Maria*," which was celebrated that day, and had doubtless occasioned a more than usual excitement in the grand square at sunrise. Kate, as was her wont, had separated herself from the rest of the party, to examine some objects that excited her curiosity; but she quickly returned, and, taking Ethel by the arm, led her noiselessly to the foot of a large pillar at the end of the choir. There, on a small altar, stood a carved and ornamented box, to receive the contributions of the charitably disposed; and on the front of the box was this inscription:—"*Oblazione per la festa al cuore di Maria S: S: Refuggio dei Peccatori.*"[1]

[1] "Alms for the Festival to the Heart of Mary, most Holy. The Refuge of Sinners."

With pity for the superstition that could prompt such expressions, the Aubreys left the church, and returned to their hotel, where all hope of quiet was precluded by the ever-increasing throng and bustle in the square. Again in the evening they repaired to M. Bert's church; and then, hearing that the cathedral was to be illuminated in honour of the *fête*, they bent their steps towards the large and handsome building. The whole of the immense façade was covered with small lamps of many colours, arranged in a variety of patterns and appropriate devices; and all so ingeniously connected by inflammable threads, that they could be lighted almost simultaneously from the foot of the wall. Our travellers reached the *Place* in front of the *Duomo* just in time to see this operation performed; and they were much amused by watching the light flying up the lofty building; springing, as it were, from lamp to lamp, and shining out with incredible rapidity in bright and dazzling stars, and letters, and scrolls, of every form and colour. It was really a magnificent sight; but the Aubreys soon retired from the *Place*, regretting that such a spectacle should be exhibited on the Christian Sabbath, and for such a sadly mistaken purpose.

A few days sufficed to show them all that is worth seeing at Turin, and in its environs; and then they made their arrangements for proceeding to Geneva. Thither Reginald could not accompany them, as he

wished to return immediately to England, and then to rejoin his family, after a few weeks, in Switzerland. He therefore engaged a seat for himself, and one for Herbert, in the diligence that was to leave Turin in the afternoon, and cross Mont Cenis by night, arriving in twenty-four hours at Chambery. He regretted not being able to travel over the magnificent pass by the light of day, but the diligence arrangements did not admit of that; and he was obliged to console himself with the thought that the moon would, on this occasion, prove his friend, and that perhaps he should not have to regret the absence of the brighter luminary. In this hope he was not disappointed.

It was arranged that Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey and their daughters and servants should set out the next day in two carriages, similar to those in which they had crossed the Appennines, and send their heavy baggage by diligence to Chambery, where they would find it at the hotel where Reginald was to secure accommodation for their party. Before his departure a packet of letters arrived, that had been forwarded from Florence, and all were soon deeply engaged in reading their own dispatches, several of which were from their own dear native land. Kate received a very long one from her cousin Janet, which seemed to interest her extremely, and when the rest of the party were at leisure, she read it again aloud. We will not inflict the whole of it upon our readers, but a few extracts may

tell poor Janet's trials and discomforts in her own words.

"I am inclined to envy you, dear Katie, when I read your glowing descriptions of picture-galleries and palaces, of villas and of vineyards; and I long to fly away from this now solitary spot, which was once so happy and so beloved, and to find myself amongst you all once more. You tell me also that you are shortly going to Switzerland, the land towards which my heart yearns more than towards any other spot on earth. Do not think that I murmur or feel discontented because it is not my lot to look upon all the glorious works of God that you are privileged to behold. No; I can rejoice in the thought of your enjoyment, and look forward with pleasure to the time when you will tell me with your own dear voice of all that you have seen,—if indeed I live till your return, which I often doubt. And when I feel my own increasing weakness, I remember a passage which I met with lately, and which well expresses my own feelings and expectations. My author says, 'I fancy sometimes, that, in some mysterious way, every want will be made up to us in the next life; and especially so with reference to all the beautiful things that travelled people talk of. . . . I comfort myself with the fancy that I see as much as is good for me here; and that, if I make a good use of that, I shall see the Alps and the Andes in the world to come, or something much more worth seeing.' Do you not

admire my philosophy, Kate? But, I thank God, I have something better than philosophy to comfort me under every trial and every suffering. Had I not learnt from you and Ethel, and your good brother, to feel assured that every earthly trial is sent in mercy, I fear I should utterly have failed in patience during the last few months. I have not hitherto alluded to this source of bitter grief; but you must all soon know it, and I need no longer keep silence: my mother is about to marry Sir Hugh Duncombe! As soon as one short year has elapsed since my own dearest father was laid in the grave, another is to take his place—and such another! Oh, Katie, I need not tell you what this prospect is to me. I feel that such misery will be more than I can bear; and when my mother first informed me of her intentions, and I attempted to remonstrate, she told me that if her home became disagreeable to me, I had only to accept the hand of Mr. Sloper—which she knew he only waited for sufficient encouragement to offer—and I might have a respectable home of my own. This I will never do, for I would rather die a hundred deaths than marry where I could not love; and you know, Katie, that I shall never love again. Pray for me, then, my dearest friends, that it may please God, either to remove me from my sorrows and difficulties, or to give me grace to bear them as I know a Christian ought to do."

All the party were much interested in this narrative;

and, when Katie had finished reading it, she looked up appealingly to her father, and said,—

"Papa, what is to be done?"

"There is but one thing for us to do," replied Mr. Aubrey, decidedly. "Janet must come to us. The poor child must not be left to her misery and loneliness, for I feel that they would kill her."

"Oh, thank you, my good, kind father!" exclaimed Kate. "I knew you would say so; and my mother, I am sure, will not dissent."

"Assuredly not, my dear," said Mrs. Aubrey. "It will be a real pleasure to me to have Janet with us, and to see her health and strength and spirits all return beneath the clear skies and the refreshing breezes of Switzerland. I will write immediately to her mother, and propose that she shall come out and join us when Reginald returns next month. The dear girl will then be spared the anguish of seeing a marriage which must be so distasteful to her in every point of view; and when she has once become a member of our family, I do not think we shall resign her to the care of Sir Hugh and Lady Duncombe."

"My sister-in-law is a remarkable person," observed Mr. Aubrey, with a shrewd and quiet smile that sometimes accompanied and gave point to his remarks. "She has all her life been plotting and contriving for the accomplishment of some favourite scheme; and it is really wonderful how often she has succeeded. Now

she has obtained her object in securing a title and the possession of a large place, before she is obliged to leave Altringham. She has certainly failed, and will always fail, in persuading Janet to act in any way that is not sincere and honourable; but still her design of getting rid of the incumbrance of such a daughter will be brought about, though by other means than she had devised."

"You do not think, then," said Ethel, "that my aunt will object to Janet's travelling with Reginald?"

"Certainly not," replied her father; and the same smile again lighted up his fine intelligent features. "Certainly not; for the plan will exactly fall in with one of her long-cherished schemes, but which, I presume, she had abandoned in despair, when she tried to induce Janet to become Mrs. Sloper. That effort has failed; and now her former hopes will all revive again, and she will place her dear child under her cousin's protection in the fullest assurance that he will act towards her as a brother."

"Certainly she may do so," said Reginald, laughing at his father's insinuations.

"I know it, my boy, or I should not consent to the arrangement. Janet's nice little maid must travel with you as a chaperon, and Viking may attend you as a guard of honour; and the most anxious mother must be satisfied. I am sure my sister-in-law will be more than satisfied."

"Really, Charles," said his wife, "I never knew you so satirical. I am glad, however, that you feel so sure of Sarah's consenting to our wish, whatever may be her motives. I shall have no rest until that dear girl is taken away from her, and from her cruel endeavour to force her to accept as a husband a man whom she can neither love nor respect."

"Well, Ellen," answered Mr. Aubrey, laughing, "if I am satirical, I think you are worse. This subject seems to excite us all, so we will cease to discuss it; and only hope and pray that we may be in time to save dear Janet's health from suffering still more. I have great confidence in change of scene for all such maladies as hers."

CHAPTER XVI.

REGINALD left the Hotel de l'Europe at the appointed hour, and repaired with Herbert to the office from whence the diligence was to start. He took his seat, and waited some time, wondering at the delay, when, just as he was desiring his servant to inquire its cause, two *gens-d'armes* came up to the door of the heavy vehicle, leading between them a tall gentlemanly-looking man. He immediately took the place opposite to Reginald, and two or three other passengers having entered, the postillions cracked their long whips, and the diligence drove slowly down the street and out of the town. For some time none of the travellers spoke; but Reginald could not help looking with interest at the young man opposite to him, whose whole air and features bespoke him to be of gentle birth, notwithstanding the somewhat disordered state of his toilet, and the neglected condition of his hair and beard. Long before they reached Suza, a small town near the foot of Mont Cenis, Reginald had overcome his English shyness, and entered into conversation with the Italian, who, at first, received his advances with coldness and

reserve, but whose sad countenance brightened up at some remarks made by his companion on the state of Italy, with regard to its soil, its cultivation, and its government. The conversation then became general; and Reginald was struck with the tone of disaffection that pervaded everything that was said by any of the party, that bore any reference to politics. They spoke of the Grand Duke of Tuscany as being extremely unpopular throughout his dominions, and the decided enemy of all liberty, civil and religious. They said that he held scarcely any intercourse with his subjects, never seeking to gain their esteem or affection, and living so gloomy and retired a life that it was seldom even known at Florence whether he was residing in his capital city or not. Of the King of Sardinia they spoke much more favourably, and gave many instances of his liberality of feeling towards his Vaudois subjects, to whom he allowed religious privileges that were never granted to any other Protestants in his dominions.

"I have myself experienced this liberality," observed the young Italian. "It has been my fate to spend nearly a fortnight within the walls of a prison at Turin,"—he looked rather proud as he made this avowal,—"and one of the Vaudois pastors had free liberty to enter the cells, and hold any intercourse with the prisoners that they chose to encourage. I saw him frequently, and his zeal and piety must have won the respect, at least, of all who knew him."

"Was his name Bert?" asked Reginald. "The same who preaches in the Vaudois Church at Turin?"

"It was," replied the stranger; "and it is a name that must be honoured by men of all creeds and all parties. His unaffected earnestness is such, that no one can doubt his own sincerity of belief in the doctrines that he teaches."

"If it is his office to visit the prisoners," said Reginald, "he must meet with many very interesting cases, and a great variety of characters."

"He makes it his business to seek out sin and sorrow wherever they are to be found, and to minister to the relief of both," replied the Italian. "I wish I had known him long ago; my life might have been a happier one."

Reginald regarded him with interest; for an expression of deep and earnest thought was upon his brow. Presently he again addressed him.

"I imagine, Signor, from the manner in which you spoke just now of your recent imprisonment, that it was for some political offence. I know that there has been great excitement among the friends of liberty in various parts of Italy; and some, whose names are familiar to me, have unfortunately been concerned in these movements."

"I was compromised with the Government," replied the Italian, again resuming the tone of reserve that had marked his manner at first. "I was suspected of

political offences; but, as I am now released, it is to be presumed that they were not proved against me."

As he said this, the Italian looked full into the English traveller's countenance; and seeming quite satisfied with the scrutiny, he rapidly directed a glance towards one of the passengers at the other end of the carriage, and made a sign to Reginald not to speak so freely. Then he continued, with an air of unconcern,—

"Pastor Bert preached to me repentance for many acts of my past life; but not for those which caused my arrest. I have nothing to repent of there."

"Are you going to Chambery?" asked Reginald, taking the hint to keep clear of dangerous subjects.

"I am," said the Italian; "and you will be amused to hear that such is the paternal care which the Florentine Government takes of her subjects, that all my luggage is gone to Geneva by some other conveyance, and I am compelled to go round by Chambery. I suppose they feared I should return to the Florentine States if I found myself and my portmanteau at my own disposal. It is a curious arrangement; but I shall probably go into the Vaudois country for a time. I am acquainted with another pastor there; who is as good and as honest a man as Monsieur Bert. I shall be glad to know whether his religious feelings and opinions are the same."

"I have no doubt you will find them exactly similar,

Signor. But are you not at liberty to return into Tuscany?"

"Not at present: nor do I indeed desire it, though the best of mothers is there, anxiously waiting my arrival. "My poor dear mother!" he continued, with much feeling; "I fear she has suffered greatly from anxiety during my absence. And there is another, too;—has she suffered?"

The stranger became silent, and appeared absorbed in his own reflections: and Reginald conversed with his other fellow-travellers on various indifferent subjects. He did not again touch on politics, or on the recent disturbances in Italy; for he remembered the Italian's warning glance; and his own observations led him to suspect that there was amongst them a spy, who might take advantage of any imprudent or personal remark.

At Suza the diligence stopped, to allow the travellers to take refreshment, at a very dirty and uninviting auberge; and also to harness nine fresh horses to the cumbrous vehicle before commencing the steep ascent of Mont Cenis. The sun was now setting: a great part of the mountain range lay in shadow, while the snowy summits sparkled in the horizontal rays that still fell upon them from the glowing sky beyond. The slow ascent began, and every moment the shades of evening became deeper, and the solemnity of the scenery increased. Several lamps were now lighted on

each side of the diligence, which consisted of three compartments; one for first, and one for second-class passengers, and the third, called the *Rotonde*, for such as wished to enjoy the indulgence of smoking.

Another diligence from Suza followed a few hundred yards behind; and the light from the lamps of both fell brightly on the steep rocks that formed a broken and overhanging wall to the road on the left, and added much to the picturesque and savage beauty of the scenery. In several places the snow lay in great frozen masses, as it had fallen from the heights above; and filled up the ravines across which the road was constructed; while at other spots, a sudden turn brought the travellers in view of a rushing cataract, on the upper part of which the moonbeams fell brightly, while the mass of foaming water passed away beneath the cavernous arches on which the road was supported, and went roaring down the deep dark precipice below. It was a scene to conjure up romantic feelings, and to inspire serious reflections; and as Reginald gazed silently from the window, he wished for his sister Kate to enjoy the solemn spectacle with him; and regretted that she would travel through it when the light of day would, he thought, take from the grandeur of the effect. By and by the moon rose brightly over the clouds that had hitherto partially concealed her, and lighted up the whole view with her soft silvery beams. Reginald could no longer bear the confinement of the diligence;

and as the driver paused, before commencing a still steeper ascent, he got out, and was followed by all the other passengers.

The young Italian walked by Reginald's side; and observing that the individual whom he seemed to suspect was at some distance behind, having stopped to light his cigar at the driver's pipe, he drew closer to him, and said in a low deep voice,—

"I see that you are one of those noble Englishmen who feel for poor degraded Italy, and sympathize with her oppressed sons in their desire to free her from the yoke of Austria. I felt that I could confide in you, and tell you all my story; but I caught that ill-looking fellow's eye fixed inquiringly upon us, and I believe him to be an agent of the Government, sent, very probably, to watch my steps, and see whether I attempt to go back to my own country. Or possibly he was commissioned to try and entrap me into uttering some disloyal sentiments, which might be made the pretext for casting me again into prison. Happily I checked myself in time; and I believe he was the man who spoke most strongly against our wretched Government."

"He did so," replied Reginald, "and that prevented me from entertaining any suspicions with regard to him."

"No doubt that was just what he intended. He wished, I imagine, to deceive us both. But you do not know the miserable system of espionage that is carried

on throughout the Italian States as well as I do, Signor. You, in your free country, may express your sentiments without fear of consequences. Would to God it were so in Italy!"

"It is a fearful state of things," said Reginald, "and the sympathies of many of my countrymen are with those brave men who groan beneath it. Still we feel that the time is not yet come to free this glorious land from the yoke of bondage; and we regret all futile efforts that may be made with this object, but which only serve to rivet her chains more gallingly."

"It is most true," answered the Italian; "we have gained nothing yet. The fact is, that all our schemes are discovered by our wives, our sisters, or our friends; and they are then extorted from them in what ought to be the sacred confidence of confession. O Signor, some of those confessors are playing an atrocious part! They are associated with the police, and they defeat all our best-laid plans. So long as Italy is under the thraldom of the ecclesiastics, there is no hope for her. A month ago, I should have told you that I believed our country's only hope lay in a massacre of the whole band,—of the hundred and twenty thousand that infest the land. But I am not ashamed to say, that pastor Bert has taught me a better creed. I would not slay them now. I know, too, that there are many, very many, noble and pious men amongst them, whose lives are far better than their creed. My hope now is, that

all such men will separate themselves from the rest, and form a free church, to which honest and intelligent men may unite themselves."

The suspicious stranger was drawing near, so Reginald made no reply to the Italian's animated speech, and asked him some question about his mother.

"I wish you knew her, Signor," he replied; and his eyes glistened as he spoke. "She is a perfect specimen of an Italian lady, and of a Christian mother. Even you English, who are so justly proud of your women, must admire and esteem her. I have never known her equal,—except, perhaps, once. Yes, there is one, who must be all that my mother was when young. But I ought never to wish to see her again. All my very small possessions are confiscated; all my hopes for the future are blighted, and I am poor, and an outcast. She could not look on me with favour. But my mother can never be lost to me on earth. Poverty and disappointment; no, nor even shame,—from which, thank God, I am free!—would ever make her regard her son with less fervent and devoted love. By this time, I trust she knows that I am free, and her fond heart rejoices. I sent a letter by one in whom I believe I may confide so far—monk though he is."

"It is time for us to resume our seats," interrupted the suspected spy, rather bluntly, as he joined the speakers. The diligence stopped, and all immediately entered it; and no further conversation of an interest-

ing nature was possible. But enough had passed between Reginald and the Italian, to make each party wish for a more intimate acquaintance; and strange imaginations had arisen in the mind of the former, that led him very anxiously to desire to ascertain the name of the Italian. This he resolved to do when they arrived at Chambery, where he hoped their troublesome companion would leave them to undisturbed intercourse.

All that the Italian had said now came back to his recollection, and convinced him more and more that he was indeed no other than Marco Griffi,—his own cousin, and his favoured rival! It was his manner of speaking of his mother, that had first aroused the suspicion in his mind, and he had sympathized in the feelings the young man had expressed, which recalled to his memory the remark of a distinguished writer, that "there is in every good man's heart a sublime strength and purity of attachment, which he never does, and never can, feel for any woman on earth except his mother." Other affections may be greater in degree,—it is right they should be so;—but none can be the same in kind.

In five hours, from the time of their leaving Suza, the travellers reached the post-house on the summit of the mountain; and there the diligence was again stopped, to have the greater part of the horses taken off, as they could only be an incumbrance in descending the winding declivity on the other side. Three hours'

rapid descent brought them to the auberge at the bottom of the mountain; but there Reginald found no opportunity of speaking privately to the young Italian, for the eye of their fellow-traveller was ever upon them, and he again entered the diligence with his curiosity unsatisfied, but with a still stronger conviction that the interesting stranger was his own near relative.

The rest of the journey to Chambery, though less striking than the magnificent mountain pass, was nevertheless, very beautiful; but the impatience that Reginald felt to solve the mystery respecting his companion, made the way seem long and tedious to him. At length they reached their expected place of rest and liberty; but what was Reginald's disappointment and vexation, when the passengers of the two diligences met at the *table-d'hôte*, at finding that the young Italian was not of the number. He anxiously inquired of one of his other fellow-travellers whether he knew what had become of him; and was told, that almost immediately after reaching Chambery, he had been conducted to another diligence, just starting for Geneva, into which the suspicious-looking stranger had also entered. All hope of again meeting the object of his curiosity, was therefore, indefinitely removed; but, at the same time, all remaining uncertainty as to his identity was also removed, by the traveller proceeding:—

"Poor Marco Griffi! His fate has been a sad and a

strange one. He and another of the leaders in the late attempted insurrection were tried at Milan, and condemned to death. They were led out to execution, and Ruffini was shot, but Griffi spared. I learnt these facts at Turin, whither he was brought, and kept a prisoner until yesterday. Now he is an exile and a beggar; and if I know anything of his character, he would gladly exchange his lot with that of his friend who fell by his side at Milan!"

Reginald checked the expression of the deep interest he felt in this narration, and merely replied,—

"I think his fate more strange than sad. There may be brighter days in store for him, and he looks like a man who could conquer any circumstances, and win fortune under any disadvantages. Is any reason assigned for his life being thus spared at the last moment?"

"Our rulers are not very communicative on such subjects," answered the traveller, who was himself a Florentine; "but there was a report that it was owing to the influence of some wealthy and powerful countryman of yours, Signor. I suppose they wished to shake Griffi's courage by the near approach of death; but he is not the man to tremble at such threatenings."

"It is well so to live," replied Reginald, gravely, "as to have no cause to fear death, in whatever form it may approach."

The stranger looked surprised. It was evident his

idea of the qualities that ought to enable a man to meet any doom with composure, differed widely from that which prompted the young Englishman.

"Well," he observed, "at all events Griffi had not much to leave. He was obliged to work hard to maintain his mother. How she will subsist now that he is an exile, I cannot tell. And there were two young girls who lived with them; to one of whom I was told he was betrothed. But I doubt if they will ever see him again. The police are very active in Tuscany, and they have many to help them; and if Griffi ever gets within their grasp again, I question if even English influence, or English gold, would avail to set him free."

Reginald did not prolong the conversation. He had heard all that his companion could tell him of Marco Griffi's public career, and it gave him no pleasure to hear his private life and private feelings discussed. So, when the *table-d'hote* broke up, he walked forth on to the promenade, and thought of his cousin's bright and happy prospects—of which he was still unconscious—with more of generous congratulation than could have been expected under the circumstances. He tried to divert his mind from painful comparisons, by listening to the military band that was playing some stirring national airs for the benefit of the *beau monde* of Chambery; and he could not withhold his admiration from the fine, martial-looking Sardinian soldiers, whose dark-

green uniform, and graceful hat and feathers, set off their figures to the greatest advantage. But many of the hardy veterans had fallen in the Crimea; and these were chiefly young recruits, who were being trained to emulate the courage and the discipline that had won such fame for their predecessors.

CHAPTER XVII.

When Janet Aubrey wrote that letter to her cousin Kate, from which we have already given some extracts, she had not the remotest hope of the result that it would produce. The idea of joining her relatives on the Continent was one which she had never ventured to entertain; nor would she have believed herself equal to the fatigue of such a journey, if it had seemed likely to be proposed.

Great was therefore her surprise when she received Kate's reply, in which was enclosed Mrs. Aubrey's letter to her mother, the purport thereof being briefly told, with many hopes from herself and Ethel, that it might prove successful. With some trepidation she carried it to her mother's apartment, forgetting all her feelings of indisposition in the excitement of the proposed pleasure, and in fear that it might be denied to her.

To her great relief, she found neither Sir Hugh Duncombe nor Mr. Sloper sitting with Mrs. Aubrey; for this had latterly become so frequent an occurrence as to have rendered her own visits to her mother's drawing-room very rare during the mornings. The baronet had, with astonishing facility, transferred all his homage

from the portionless daughter, who repulsed it, to the more wealthy mother, who encouraged, and indeed sought it. Mrs. Aubrey had, at one time, greatly desired to effect a marriage between Janet and Sir Hugh, and had proposed to herself to take the entire management of the young Lady Duncombe, and of everything over which her new position would give her any control. But when these hopes were disappointed, and her daughter obstinately refused to give her any prospect of governing Sir Hugh and his establishment with a delegated authority, it seemed to strike her that it would be still more agreeable to govern in her own right; and she was not long in bringing the calculating baronet to the same conviction.

Then it became another subject for consideration and for scheming, how Janet was to be disposed of. Mrs. Aubrey knew her aversion to Sir Hugh Duncombe, which was by no means lessened at the prospect of his becoming her step-father; and therefore, in every point of view, her residence with the newly-married couple would be undesirable. The next resource that occurred to her mother's fertile brain was to marry her to Mr. Sloper. He had always shown her decided attention, and it would be an excellent connexion for him. Certainly Janet had never appeared to encourage his advances; but then she was cold and reserved to every one since Edmund Aubrey's death. Mrs. Aubrey did not understand such long cherishing of melancholy

feelings, and she hoped that Janet had ceased to think of her cousin by this time. Besides this, she had become very serious of late, and seemed to have no pleasure in anything that other young people enjoyed, so nothing could be more suitable than for her to be a clergyman's wife.

With this idea, Mr. Sloper's visits were encouraged, and false hopes were freely administered by Sir Hugh, until he thought himself sure of success; and he only waited the arrival of a favourable moment to make his proposals in form. Day after day he waylaid poor Janet in her rides and walks, or joined her in her cottage visits. But his assiduities won him no favour in Janet's eyes; and the attentions, which she found herself unable effectually to repulse, became to her a source of serious annoyance.

Janet was not naturally endowed with much strength of character, and she knew it and deplored it. How often had she wished that she possessed either her cousin Ethel's calmness and quiet dignity of manner, or Kate's self-reliance and readiness of resource! From childhood Kate had possessed these useful qualities to a remarkable degree; and they gave her a power of either averting difficulties, or overcoming them, that was not commonly combined with so much gentle diffidence as marked her character. It was not pride or self-confidence that animated her, but an inward assurance that she could accomplish whatever she

really set herself to perform. She had never, in all the little difficulties and dangers of her young life, failed in finding a resource or devising an expedient; and she never expected to fail. The consequence was, that she never lost her self-possession in any emergency, but was ready to take advantage of every available help, and to maintain her own proper position under the most untoward or embarrassing circumstances.

All this poor Janet had seen and admired, but she could not acquire or even emulate it. She could not, as either of her cousins would have done, put a stop at once to Mr. Sloper's unwelcome attentions. She could not convince her mother that she had firmly resolved never to marry any man on earth. She could not persuade that mother that her pale looks and depressed spirits did not arise from ill-humour and discontent; nor could she even feel satisfied herself that she was not partly to blame for the increasing languor that made every occupation a labour, and every self-prescribed duty a painful task. Sometimes she felt, what she had expressed to Kate, that she should not live to see her relatives return; and that thought was far from being a painful one, for death had lost its terrors to her, and life its attractions. But Mrs. Aubrey had no idea of such a termination to the embarrassments that her daughter caused her; and one more scheme had arisen in her active mind for disposing of her comfortably and respectably.

Janet had refused a match that offered great worldly advantages; she had also declined sharing the vicar's parochial responsibilities, and adding to the cheerfulness of his pleasant home. Why should she not enter the convent in which her cousin Beatrice was a professed nun, and there indulge her taste for acts of piety and works of charity? The establishment was one of the Sisters of Mercy; and Mrs. Aubrey did not think the fact of their being Romanists would prove any barrier to Janet's being received, at least as a boarder, and for a limited time. If she found the charms of the place so great as to induce her to desire to remain permanently her mother would surely not object.

Sister Beatrice was therefore summoned to Altringham, with a secret intimation of the object to be attained; and so well did she succeed in depicting the calm repose, and yet the active benevolence, that marked the lives of the sisterhood, that Janet almost breathed a sigh of envy. Mrs. Aubrey began to hope, and Sister Beatrice earnestly to desire, that the fading form and crushed spirit of her young cousin would be committed to her guardianship. She was a good and benevolent woman. The self-will that had led her to embrace a conventual life had died away beneath the privation and discipline to which she had been subjected; and the better qualities of her mind had ripened and borne fruit. It was much to be regretted that this happy change had not been brought about in the midst

of domestic duties and social life; and that the widowed mother of Sister Beatrice had sunk to her grave in loneliness and sadness, while her daughter imagined she was performing a more sacred duty in nursing and tending strangers. But so it was; and Beatrice would most gladly, and in all good faith, have instilled the same notions into Janet's mind. Here, however, she failed. The moment her young cousin perceived her object, the weakness that led her to listen favourably to the proposal that she should spend a few months as a private boarder in the convent, and so avoid being present at the dreaded marriage, was gone. Janet spoke firmly and decidedly, though it cost her a painful effort; and the nun departed, regretting her young cousin's blindness to her own welfare, and leaving Mrs. Aubrey much disappointed and not a little displeased.

Happily, at this very juncture, the welcome letters from Turin arrived; and, as we have said, Janet carried her aunt's despatch to her mother's room. She need not have trembled, poor girl; for the proposition was received with unwonted graciousness, and the only drawback to the pleasure of the interview was the rather sneering manner in which Mrs. Aubrey remarked,—

"You seem quite to have forgotten your excessive weakness, Janet, in your eagerness to accept this invitation to Switzerland. I have always felt sure it was chiefly imaginary; and I have no doubt change of air,

and pleasant companions, will quite effect a cure. I hope your cousin, Reginald, will take great care of you during the long journey."

"Reginald will take the same care of me as he would of Kate," replied Janet, "and travelling is very easy now. Oh!" she exclaimed, with animation, while her heightened colour and sparkling blue eyes had all the look of renewed health, "oh, I feel strong already, at the very thought of those mountain breezes and rushing cataracts! But I must go and tell Mrs. Goodwin that her son is coming to England with Reginald, and will soon be here. I have a letter for her from Herbert, which the poor woman cannot even read."

And away she went on her pony, with the black dog, Viking, bounding by her side, and looking so different to her usual self, that old Rebecca Fowler could not withhold her exclamations of surprise, as she opened the gate to let her pass.

"Well, to be sure, Miss Janet! where have you been getting that colour in your dear face, and that light in your pretty blue eyes? Some news, I guess, from the honourable family in foreign parts."

"Yes, Rebecca, very good news. My cousin Reginald is coming home, and then I am going back with him to my uncle and aunt."

"'*For better, for worse—for better, for worse;*' I hope?" said the old woman, smiling, and looking up in Janet's face, with a bright merry glance of inquiry in

her keen grey eye. "Ah, Miss Janet, I see it all in your blushes. But it's all right, my dear young lady, and God bless you both. He is a good gentleman, and you cannot do better *now*."

"No, Rebecca," said Janet, eagerly; and a tear was in her eye, and the colour was gone from her cheek. "No, Rebecca, never! You must not say that to me again. It will never be true. But I am glad, very glad, to go to my cousins; and I am still more glad to leave Altringham this summer. You know why, Rebecca. I feel that it would have killed me to stay."

"And no wonder, Miss Janet. It almost kills me to think of it," and the ready apron was at her eyes: "I can hardly bear to open the gate to that proud Sir Hugh, who rides by as if he were the master; but very different from either the honourable master that is gone, or the one that I hope is soon to come back, and govern his own honourable house. It will be a glad day for all the neighbourhood when that comes to pass," added Rebecca, forgetting what Janet had just said, and reverting to her fixed notion that the return of the Charles Aubreys would render her dear young lady a still closer member of their family, and ensure her frequent, perhaps constant, residence at Altringham.

"But what is to become of Ruth?" she inquired, suddenly recollecting her daughter, who had been overlooked in the more weighty considerations respecting the honourable house. "Is my daughter to come to

me? I shall not let her stay up at the Hall, with all the strange servants coming and going, and you not there to look after her, Miss Janet."

"You may set your mind at ease on that subject," replied Janet, smiling. "My good Ruth is to go with me, and to share all my perils by sea and by land. You are not afraid to let her accompany me, Rebecca?"

"Not if it were to the ends of the earth, Miss Janet!" exclaimed the faithful old servant. "She has belonged to your honourable house ever since she was born; and as long as she lives, I pray God she may still belong to it. That is my idea of service; but it is not the way of many."

Janet feared some long stories of the good old times were coming; so she bade Rebecca farewell, and, touching her beautiful black pony with the whip, she cantered away towards Mrs. Goodwin's cottage.

The good woman was always glad to see her young friend and benefactor; but especially so when she found that she had brought such welcome news of her dear Herbert. As Janet had observed, she was unable to read her son's letter, and she was, therefore, grateful for her visitor's offer to make her acquainted with its contents; a part of which, as they greatly interested the fair reader, may perhaps interest our readers also:—

"..... I have told you of many beautiful things that I have seen in Florence; but I think there are many others which you, dear mother, would not like.

The streets are mostly narrow and dirty; and the people stand idly about, smoking, or gossipping in their strange language, or eating artichokes and other vegetables that are sold at every corner, and strewing the leaves all over the rough paving-stones. After the hot weather began the smells were dreadful, and I was glad when my master allowed me to go out into the country with him and the young ladies, and carry their sketch-books. But I must tell you of one strange sight I saw the evening before we left Florence. I was standing by a shop in a very poor street, when I observed several children run in from another street, shouting and laughing; and then followed such a procession! First came several monks, all dressed in brown gowns, with hoods over their heads, and no shoes on their feet. Then followed a long line of the coachmen of the Grand Duke, as the king of this country is called, walking two and two. There were thirty-eight of them, dressed in rather shabby liveries of blue and silver, and each of them carried a great wax candle, three or four feet long; while old men and boys, all in rags, ran stooping by their sides, and catching the drippings in their hands, or old tattered hats. After them came a band of military music; and a crowd of beggars and idle children, filled up the street. I could not learn what the meaning of all this folly could be. The beggars in Florence are very troublesome. They follow the ladies and gentlemen up and down the streets, and even into

the confectioners' shops, whining and crying, and holding out their dirty hands almost into their faces. They want the English police to put a stop to it. . . . . . I have many more odd things to tell you all, and I have some little presents for each of you; but you must wait till we meet, dear mother, and that I hope will be soon. I am going to England with my master; and to Altringham to fetch Miss Janet, and then back again to Italy, before Mr. Aubrey returns to live at home. But, mother, I must tell you one thing. It is my belief, that the Hall is not to be Mr. Aubrey's home at all. Some Italian painter has turned out to be the right master; and he is to be Mr. Marcus Aubrey, by-and-by. I mean he is the son of the old master's brother, Mr. Marcus, who died in Italy a long while ago. I will tell you all I know about it when I see you. . . . ."

This was startling intelligence for Janet, who had received no information from Kate of the discovery of her cousin Marcus Aubrey. She had, indeed, heard of the drawing-master, Signor Marco Griffi; but she could not easily connect him with this strange news of Herbert's; and she waited very impatiently for Reginald's arrival, and the unravelling of the mystery. Why Kate had refrained from alluding to it she could not guess; but she could hardly suppose there would prove to be no real foundation for Herbert's not very clear story.

She had not very long to wait; for Reginald soon appeared at Altringham, and told her all those particulars respecting the identity of Marco Griffi as the son of Marcus Aubrey, with which our readers are already acquainted. But he said nothing of the lovely Isabel Anzilotti, and her supposed engagement to their handsome Venetian cousin. Neither did he betray any of his own suspicions respecting Kate's altered health and subdued spirits. All these things he left to female penetration to discover, or female confidence to reveal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Aubreys reached Geneva, and took up their abode in a villa near the borders of the lake. Kate had shown much less than her usual amount of interest and enthusiasm at the prospect of really beholding the long-desired Swiss mountains. But her unwonted indifference took flight when the glorious reality burst upon her astonished gaze, and

> "The monarch of mountains,
> With his throne of clouds, and his robe of mist,
> And his diadem of snow,"

stood clearly visible in the rosy light of evening.

All the party were soon strolling by the margin of the glassy lake, and looking over its blue expanse of water, with the range of Alps and the glittering glaciers in perspective. Many were the excursions that were planned by land and by water, and all were eager to explore the beauties in detail, that looked so captivating *en masse*.

Probably our readers would feel less interested in perusing the account of many of these expeditions than the parties concerned were in making them; and there-

fore we will not try their patience with much of description. But an incident occurred not many days after the arrival of the Aubreys at Geneva that caused considerable excitement, and gave an interest to that day's adventures, greatly exceeding the mere beauty of mountain and precipice, of avelanche and cataract.

Our travellers had gone to spend the day in wandering over the varied scenes of rock and valley, that render every excursion in this picturesque land so attractive. They had driven to a small inn on the lower slope of the mountain; and, leaving the carriage to await their return in the evening, had walked up the narrow and rugged pathway to a secluded spot, where they were defended from the heat of the noonday sun by overhanging rocks; while the lovely lake lay spread before them, sending up its many tongues of fire, as its surface was broken by a gentle breeze.

The view was magnificent, combining every variety of natural beauty, and animated by the numerous boats of every size that darted over the lake, and by the towns and detached villas that graced its borders. But after gazing at the wide prospect for a considerable time, Kate grew restless, and complained that she could find no subject for her pencil in such an extensive view. She therefore rose, and requesting Ethel to accompany her, they left their parents to enjoy rest and tranquillity, and sallied forth in search of picturesque bits of rock, or striking effects of light and shade.

They wound round a projecting point of the mountain, and entered another valley, smaller and more precipitous than the one they had left; and Ethel pointed out to her sister a very promising little *châlet*, perched on a narrow ledge of rock, that would form an admirable subject for a sketch. They therefore approached the rustic building; and taking up a favourable position, proceeded to adjust their books and pencils, with the full intention of carrying off a most faithful representation of the *châlet* and its accompaniments.

Their intentions were not, however, fated to be realized. Kate was very rapidly putting in her rough outline, and recalling, not without an inward sigh, the directions which she had received from her Italian drawing-master, with respect to the most approved method of colouring; when she suddenly perceived that a stranger was seated on a rock at no great distance from the spot which they had selected. He had evidently been engaged in the same occupation as themselves; but his sketch-book now lay at his feet, and his eyes were fixed,—not on the dark brown *châlet*, with its stone-strewn roof,—but on Kate herself.

She started, and a deep flush rose to her clear white temples; for there was something in the stranger's form that recalled past days,—days of which she never now spoke, whether she thought of them or not.

"Ethel," she said, in a low voice, but keeping her

head bent over her drawing; "let us take up our things, and return to the other glen. I see there are strangers here."

Ethel looked up at her sister, and then glanced towards the individual who had evidently discomposed her.

"He is coming towards us, Kate. We cannot move until he has passed. He will not speak to us."

But the footsteps approached, slow and measured; and Kate's heart was beating quick and irregular. She did not see, but she felt that they were not the steps of a stranger.

"Signorina," said a rich and well-known voice, as a tall figure stood beside her; "may I presume that you have not forgotten the poor drawing-master, who deserted you in so unceremonious a manner at Florence? Believe me, it was not voluntary; and I hope you will allow me to plead my excuse."

Kate looked up one moment in his face, as if to assure herself of his identity, which she had hardly doubted from the first, in spite of her little attempt at deceiving her sister and herself. Then she again looked down with a burning blush, and exclaimed hurriedly,—

"Oh, Signor Griffi—I mean, Marco Griffi; our cousin Marco—can it be you! I forget; you do not know. Come, Ethel, we will go back to my father. He will tell him all."

With most unfeigned astonishment the young Italian

gazed on the agitated girl; and began to think that her senses must be wandering. He looked inquiringly from her to Ethel; and, seeing that she also was moved, though much more composed than her sister, he said in English,—

"May I ask the meaning of this, Miss Aubrey? Have I done wrong in addressing you?"

"Oh no, Signor," she replied, with a kindly smile, that reassured him. "We are very glad to see you, and to know that you are safe; but very strange things have occurred since we last saw you, and they require a long explanation. My father and mother are in a valley just round that rock. Let us rejoin them, and you shall hear all."

Meanwhile Kate was hastily gathering her drawing materials together, and appearing so much occupied as to have no time to speak to Marco Griffi, or even to glance at him. He thought she was offended, though he could not divine the cause, and he dared not again address her. So he walked by Ethel's side, and did not perceive how Kate's limbs trembled, or how she clung to her sister's arm for support.

Mrs. Aubrey was busily arranging their repast beneath the shade of the rock and of some stunted trees that grew near it, while her husband read to her the English news from *Galignani*, when she perceived her daughters returning, and instantly recognised their companion as Marco Griffi.

"Charles," she exclaimed, joyfully, "there is Marco; there is our nephew! Thank God, he is safe and free, and you have saved his life."

It was a strange hour for Marco—the hour that he spent on that mountain-platform. From a poor friendless Italian outcast, cut off from all he loved on earth, and hopeless of ever seeing again the one who was dearest of all, he found himself metamorphosed into a rich English proprietor, possessed of every advantage that wealth and connexion could give him; and not only restored to the society of that one whom he had feared was lost to him for ever, but connected to her by the ties of close relationship. Could he realize all this? No, he could not do so: and he sat silently musing on the sudden change that had fallen upon him, and feeling unable to connect all these circumstances with himself.

For many days he could not shake off the dreamy feeling of uncertainty that oppressed his mind; and he tried in vain to resume the pleasant terms of intimacy at which he had arrived at Florence. Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey were genuinely kind and friendly towards him, and did their best to make him feel that he was a welcome member of the family: and Ethel was rather patronising, for she felt the awkwardness of his position;—and very cousinly, for she liked him.

But there was something in Kate's manner that effectually, though unintentionally, checked all ap-

proach to comfortable, friendly terms with her. She could not regard him as a cousin: she could not, without a visible effort, call him "Marco;" and when she did so, her colour rose, or her lip faltered, or she looked in some way quite different to the frank, ingenuous, animated Kate Aubrey of other days.

Marco was much too diffident to ascribe all this change to the true cause; and as he was by no means indifferent to it, he naturally set it down to a cause that was untrue. He believed that Kate had observed the deep impression that she had made on him at Florence; and had resented, or, at all events, had resolved to repress, such presumption in one so greatly her inferior in the eyes of the world. She would have had no difficulty in doing so while he remained the humble teacher and she the wealthy pupil; and had their brief and happy acquaintanceship been resumed on those terms, he felt no doubt that he should have found all their freedom of conversation speedily put an end to. She need not, however, have feared, he thought, that he would ever have presumed upon the intimacy with which he had been so kindly indulged. But now he was aware, the case was altogether different; and could he blame her if her conduct was altered likewise? He loved and admired her too much to admit of his blaming anything she ever did; and here, he could not but own, she was acting the wisest and the most

dignified part. She must know and feel that he was now her equal, and that it was in his power to offer her all that any woman could desire; but Marco felt assured that Kate would never show favour to any man, whatever his position, whom she had not considered worthy of her highest estimation in a more lowly sphere. He had never flattered himself that she had regarded him as anything more than a pleasant acquaintance and an intelligent artist, and perhaps as a being who could understand and appreciate her. As such, she had honoured him with her intimacy; and a certain degree of mutual confidence had arisen between them, from which, whatever the danger had been to himself, he did not suppose she could have suffered in any way. Now she might feel that it would be difficult to keep their intimacy within the same bounds, as their near relationship would not naturally admit of it; and it would be easy for him to misconstrue her cousinly familiarity into a feeling more flattering to himself. Therefore he believed she had taken refuge in a degree of cold reserve that must show him there was no hope of her ever responding to the sentiments with which she had inspired him. Had she deceived him on this point, she would not have acted like herself; or she was incapable of deceit, and too generous to take pleasure in her conquests. And had her opinion of him, or her feelings with regard to him, been changed by the outward accidents of his position, he

would have felt that her love was not the inestimable prize that now he deemed it to be.

The result of all this reasoning was, that he felt he must either remain at Geneva, and worship his unapproachable idol at a respectful distance, and honour her all the more for the reserve that rendered him miserable; or he must leave the place, and banish himself from society which he had now a claim to share, and where, except by one, he was treated as a member of the family; and try to forget all the happiest hours of his life.

He could not return to Florence, for he was condemned to at least a temporary exile. And though Mr. Aubrey hoped to be able to get this sentence, like the more fatal one, reversed; yet, until it was so, his liberty, and perhaps his life, would be endangered by his appearing in the Tuscan dominions. His plan of going into the Vaudois country, which he had almost forgotten since he had so unexpectedly met the Aubreys, now returned to his mind, and he resolved to put it in execution. But his courage failed when he thought of fixing a day for his departure; and he had the pardonable weakness to talk of deferring it until after the arrival of Reginald, that he might meet as a cousin the man who had so greatly interested him as a stranger.

Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey encouraged him to do so, for they found all the pleasing impressions that he had

made on them at Florence very greatly increased on a more intimate acquaintance. His talents, his information, and his agreeable manners, had gained their admiration from the first; but in more essential things they had feared he was deficient. Now they were thankful to perceive a very decided change in this respect; and though much remained to be done, much was certainly begun that promised to lead to a satisfactory state of mind and feeling. For his own sake, therefore, they wished him to remain where every good principle would be encouraged and strengthened, and every lingering tendency to scepticism would be checked, so far as outward influence could effect so blessed a result. Possibly they also wished him to prolong his stay on Kate's account; for they had felt convinced that she took a very deep interest in Marco Griffi before she knew him to be her relative, and they hoped that this interest would now subside into mere friendship. They had no doubt of the mutual attachment subsisting between their nephew and Isabel Anzilotti, and they considered that it would be best for Kate at once to learn to regard Marco as her cousin, and as the betrothed husband of her young Italian friend.

Mrs. Aubrey saw the struggle that was going on in her daughter's heart, and she saw the result of it in her variable spirits and frequent returns of the languor which had been so visible during the last weeks of their

residence at Florence. But she always appeared to be utterly unconscious of any other cause for these symptoms than merely physical ones; and she spoke so openly of the ill effect which the air of Tuscany had produced on Kate, that it would have required a much larger share of vanity than Marco possessed, to have led him to suspect himself to be the cause of his fair cousin's indisposition.

And Kate herself—did she wish Marco to remain? She could not tell. She felt that his presence, especially on the terms to which he was now of course admitted, and which gave her such a full opportunity of becoming acquainted with his fine character and excellent disposition, was endangering her peace of mind. She strove to conquer every sentiment that could render the memory of Isabel, or the prospect of her being united to Marco, painful to her. And she not only *strove*, she *prayed*.

Kate had always cultivated a spirit of constant prayer,—of prayer for everything, however apparently trifling, which was to her an object of desire, or a source of anxiety. She experienced the exquisite satisfaction of feeling that every comfort, however small, comes from the hand of God; and that every event, however insignificant, is overruled by Him. Therefore to Him she looked for aid and guidance in every trouble and every embarrassment, and sought for divine assistance, even in circumstances where she would have

blushed to ask for human counsel, even that of a mother or a sister.

Certainly, in time she found the aid she asked, for her manner became much more easy and unembarrassed; which Marco attributed to his forbearing to press upon her his unwelcome attentions. She learnt to speak to him as Ethel did; and ceased to show any agitation when he suddenly made his appearance at their residence. Her mother, and even her sister, began to persuade themselves that all uncomfortable feelings had passed away; and to hope that the natural bloom would return to Katie's cheek, and the wonted elasticity to her step, before Reginald and Janet came to add to their family party.

CHAPTER XIX.

Some days after the execution had taken place at Milan, Father Bernardo made his appearance at the Villa Anzilotti, and requested a private interview with Signora Griffi. The monk was never a welcome visitor at the villa; for the sternness of his manner, and the uninviting expression of his countenance, inspired fear and suspicion, rather than love and confidence, in almost all who were acquainted with him. How it was that he had ever obtained so much influence over the ill-fated Rosa Ruffini, we cannot explain. Probably fear was the actuating motive of her conduct. She was weak and yielding; and when once he had obtained the footing of a confessor in her house, it would have been very difficult to have ejected him.

Both Isabel and the blind Juana regarded him with dread and aversion, and always avoided his presence if it were possible to do so, with as much eagerness as they sought that of the benevolent Father Jerome. Therefore, when Francesco informed the Signora, that the Dominican required a private audience, the two girls willingly retired to their favourite garden, without a suspicion that his visit betokened any peculiar evil.

He was received with much reverence, if not with great cordiality; for Signora Griffi was aware how much he had been concerned in her son's arrest and imprisonment; and yet she feared to offend him, well knowing his influence and his implacable character.

She knew that Rosa Ruffini had gone to Milan, in the hope of seeing her unfortunate husband; but she was not aware of the part which Bernardo had taken in that circumstance, or the motive which had led to the wretched wife's being admitted to Pietro's place of confinement. She therefore looked up with a sudden start, and anxiety beamed in her eyes, when the confessor said,—

"I come from Milan, Signora, and I have seen all the prisoners who were taken in that recent treasonable attempt."

"My son!" exclaimed the Signora. "Is Marco there—and is he safe?"

"The trial is over, my daughter."

"And the sentence,—Father Bernardo. In the name of the Blessed Mary, the Mother of Mercy, tell me my Marco's sentence!"

"You know, my daughter, that Griffi and Ruffini were the leaders in this guilty transaction. They could not look for much leniency on the part of the insulted government."

Signora Griffi rose from her seat. Her cheeks,—her very lips were colourless, and her eyes were stony and

dilated. She approached the monk, and knelt before him, with her hands tightly clasped across her breast, as if to still the wild beatings of her heart.

"In the name of God! I adjure you to tell me whether my son is alive or dead!"

And she waited, with parted lips, and stiffened form, for the word that was to confirm her worst fears.

Bernardo drew from his pocket a small parcel, and opening it, displayed to the mother's eyes her son's watch, a lock of his dark waving hair, and a chain of her own long tresses, which she had given to him in the days of his boyhood. She gazed upon the fatal relics; but still she spoke not—she moved not.

"The night before the execution," said the monk, slowly; "your son delivered this packet to my charge, and begged me to give it to you, with his last blessing."

But only the first words had been heard. One long wail of agony broke from the mother's heart; and she lay senseless before her tormentor. Perhaps even the isolated monk, who knew nothing of domestic ties, and had stifled all the best affections of our nature, did feel a pang when he looked upon his victim,—upon the broken-hearted mother, whom he had sacrificed to the supposed good of his order and his church.

It was his object to induce Signora Griffi to enter a convent, that was connected with the establishment of which he formed a very influential member, and which was maintained by the same funds. He knew that the

property she had inherited from her father was, though very small, yet worth securing, and would naturally devolve upon her son, who was an unworthy, and merely nominal member of the church; and who would never continue the liberal donations that his mother had never ceased to offer periodically, for the sake of procuring for her deceased husband the prayers of the Dominican brethren. It would be well, therefore, to persuade her, in her grief for Marco's supposed death, to devote herself, and all that she could call her own, to the service of the church. He also entertained a hope that her newly-discovered connexion with a wealthy English family, might render her a much richer prize than he had hitherto supposed her to be. Had her son really been executed, he had even an idea that a great part of the property that would have devolved upon him, as the heir of Marcus Aubrey, might be secured for the establishment in which his mother had taken refuge. Father Bernardo was not very learned in English law, or such an expectation might not have been cherished. But no wonder, if in this case, as in so many others, "the wish was father to the thought."

Then there was another reason why the confessor thought that the seclusion of a convent would be highly desirable for Signora Griffi. She was known to have two young girls, who were members of the Vaudois church, under her special care and guardianship. She lived under the same roof with them, and entertained

the Vaudois pastor, who came occasionally from his native mountains to visit them.

This was very dangerous intercourse, and might result in the loss of one, who was at present an obedient and tractable daughter of the church. It therefore behoved Father Bernardo to use some very strong measures to prevent such a calamity. It is true he was not Signora Griffi's confessor. That office was held by Father Jerome, who exercised it with a good faith, and a conscientious earnestness, according to his own view of his duty in the sight of God. Jerome could do no more, and he never did less. But Bernardo considered him as falling very far short of his duty; and he had frequently remonstrated with him, in no very mild terms, upon his culpable negligence in allowing the wards of Signora Griffi to receive a minister of the Vaudois heresy under their roof; and also for not insisting on her breaking her pledge to the mother of the girls, that they should be allowed the free exercise of their religion, and that no attempt should be made to induce them to change it.

To all such expostulations Jerome turned a deaf ear, and he continued to act in the same kind and benevolent manner which had marked his treatment of the orphans ever since they had been consigned to the care of the Signora. He was a good man. He loved God, and he loved his fellow-creatures; and if he erred, it was because he had been brought up in an

erroneous system: not because the errors of that system were congenial to his judgment or his heart.

We have taken advantage of poor Signora Griffi's protracted insensibility to give our readers some insight into the characters and motives of two of our *dramatis personæ.* But at length she recovered. Her shrill cry reached the ears of her adopted children as they roamed among their flowers, and spoke of Marco and of Marco's cousins. Then, hand in hand, they flew back to the apartment they had so recently left; and one glance at the articles which Bernardo had brought told the sad tale to Isabel.

Rapidly she whispered a few words to Juana, who burst into tears; and, sitting down on the ground by the side of the yet-unconscious mother, took her hand and pressed it to her breast, and called on her by every name of endearment to come back to her poor Juana.

Possibly her gentle voice and her caresses tended as much to recall the senses of the bereaved one, as Isabel's more active measures. But what an awakening it was! All the Southern vehemence of Isidora's character broke forth; and bitter were the maledictions that she invoked on the head of Bernardo, as the traitorous cause of all her woe. Then, terrified at what she had said, she wept passionate tears, and implored the monk's forgiveness. And then, seizing the sad tokens that she was childless, she pressed them to her heart, to her lips, and to her eyes.

Isabel saw that it was in vain to attempt to calm her until the torrent of her grief had flowed by. So she stood near her, restraining her own tears, and looking sternly at the unmoved features of the Dominican, and then at the agitated countenance of her to whom he should have administered consolation.

But Bernardo did not speak. If any compunctuous feelings had entered his breast, any pity for the anguish he had caused, they were banished by the wild curses that had burst from the mother's overburdened heart. He looked at her now, as one who deserved no pity; and he resolved to act relentlessly in that way which he told himself would eventually be best for her, and most for the advantage of religion.

By and by the Signora's grief was exhausted by its own violence, and she lay as pale as a corpse, and almost as motionless, waiting for the melancholy particulars, which she dreaded, yet desired, to know; but still Bernardo did not speak.

"Ask him," she whispered to Juana, who was leaning over the couch on which the Signora lay, and sobbing on her breast; "Ask him, my child, how your brother Marco died. I can bear it now."

The child raised her head, and shook back the cloud of ringlets that hung over her tearful eyes; but words refused to come, and she sank back, weeping bitterly, to her former position.

"You ask, Signora, how your son died," said the

monk, who had heard the whispered inquiry. "I would that I could say he had met his sentence as a good son of the Church. But he refused my ministrations even to the last, following in this the same course as that misguided heretic, Ruffini. I attended Griffi on the fatal morning; for I would not give up all hope of his repentance even then, and another confessor was at Rnffini's side. But it was in vain. The signal was given for us to retire, and no word of penitence was uttered by either of the prisoners. I heard the report of the muskets, and I withdrew in sadness to administer such comfort to poor Rosa Ruffini as her case would admit of."

"Rosa!—poor desolate Rosa!" cried Signora Griffi. "I had forgotten her in my own sorrow. Tell me, Father Bernardo, has she been brought to Florence? I must see her."

"You will never see her more on earth," replied the monk. "She sank beneath the blow, and died. Santa Maria, have pity on her soul! Her body was laid to rest in the cemetery of a convent at Milan. *Requiescat in pace!*"

"Thanks be to the Lord for his mercy!" said the Signora, with a sigh. "Such sorrow as hers was too great to be borne. She was left utterly desolate; and she had been the means, by her thoughtless folly, of working her own and Pietro's ruin."

"Daughter!" exclaimed the monk, with much

severity; "I counsel you not to speak in that strain. You have already, in the abandonment of your grief, uttered words for which it would be my duty to lay a heavy penance upon you, if I were not disposed to treat you with an indulgence far greater than you have merited at my hands. But if you suffer any feelings of excitement to betray you into expressions reflecting on the sacred duties of my holy office, and the confidence reposed in me by the pious and obedient Rosa Ruffini, I shall be compelled to take more severe measures to prove my authority. I fear you are little accustomed to submit to wholesome discipline and correction. Brother Jerome must be admonished to check such freedom of speech." And with a gesture of offended dignity, Bernardo went away, carrying with him the letter that would have made that distracted widow's heart to sing for joy,—that letter which her son had written to tell her that his life was spared, and that, though he was an exile, hope was not cut off for ever.

Many were the efforts made to induce the Signora to retire at once to the seclusion of a convent. Even the good Jerome joined in these endeavours; for he thought her sorrow would there find the best alleviation, and her life be most usefully spent. Had he known that her son was yet alive, he would have acted otherwise; but Bernardo knew him too well to commit such a secret to his keeping, and by this means he secured his sincere co-operation in his design.

So crushed was Signora Griffi by the blow that had fallen upon her, that she had little strength to resist the arguments of Bernardo, or the solicitations of Jerome; and the orphan girls began to fear she would leave them again to their loneliness. And such would, probably, have been the case, if the shrewdness and the devotion of old Francesco had not availed to open her eyes in time to save her and her young wards from such a misfortune.

A rumour reached Florence that a reprieve had been granted to one of the prisoners who were condemned to death at Milan, and this rumour was heard by Francesco when he went, as usual, to make his daily purchases in the market. He did not carry this exciting news to his mistress; but he set himself to trace it to its source, and endeavour to discover whether there was any foundation for the report. He knew the exertions that had been made by Mr. Aubrey and his English friends, to save the life of his young master; and he could not but hope that these efforts might have been successful, though no intimation of the fact had reached the unhappy mother. The death of Rosa Ruffini, which seemed to be well attested, was a convincing proof that it was not her husband who had been spared. If then, one had been rescued from a violent death, it must have been Marco Griffi; and the faithful old man's heart beat high at the idea of carrying such tidings back to the villa.

His inquiries, however, did not lead to any certainty. He even feared that the whole story might be merely an idle fabrication; and he returned home, musing on all he had heard, and resolved to spare no pains to elucidate the mystery. So occupied was he with his own thoughts, that he forgot to perform many of his customary duties in the establishment, in which he filled a variety of offices; and filled them, in general, to perfection. But this evening, the water-melons were forgotten, the iced-water was not iced, the coffee was burnt, and the bouquet that was placed daily by his mistress' plate at dinner was neglected. All these omissions were, however, scarcely noticed.

Sorrow filled the heart of Signora Griffi; and pining thought was added to sorrow in the breast of Isabel. When would their English friends return; and what would be the result of their renewed intimacy? In the midst of her grief for the loss of her "brother Marco," and her care for his afflicted mother and the blind Juana, the image of the young Englishman would return to her mind, and it always brought balm and sunshine with it. There was a something in Reginald's character that had, from the first hour of their acquaintance, exercised a strange influence over the spirit of the impulsive Italian girl. He was so calm, so earnest; so strong to master his own emotions, and so powerful to control those of others. Isabel felt herself constrained to look up to him,

young as he was, with a feeling of respectful admiration and esteem that she had seldom entertained for any one before. The openness and perfect simplicity of his character also formed, in her eyes, a very pleasing contrast to the generality of her Italian acquaintance, and led her to treat him with an intimacy and freedom, which in an English girl might have been deemed forward; but which, being perfectly natural in Isabel, and united with much grace and refinement, were extremely fascinating. Reginald had experienced this; but he had considered her as the affianced bride of another, and had attributed her ease of manner to that very fact, and had responded to it in a way which he meant to be merely friendly, but which the young Italian felt to be very devoted and very attractive.

Would he change during his absence from Florence? or would he return the same that he had ever been since she had known him? This was all she could desire; for she had entire confidence in him. She knew it was not in Reginald Aubrey to deceive her, to win her heart, and then leave it to wither.

The following day, when Francesco returned from the city, he sought his mistress, and informed her that he had some business which would occupy him several days—it might be a week—at a distance from Florence, and he asked her permission to leave the villa at break of day next morning, in order to prosecute his journey without loss of time. Signora Griffi was surprised;

for, during all the years that the old Venetian had served her—from the time when he used to row her in her gay gondola over the smooth waters of beautiful Venice, with her beloved Marcus by her side, even to the present time when he formed the whole of her male establishment—Francesco had never left her for a day. Still she had perfect confidence in him, and knew that he must have a good reason—probably a merely personal one—for so unwonted a request, and she asked no questions.

"Go," she said, "my good Francesco; and may the blessing and protection of our holy mother Mary rest upon you, and bring you back in safety. God prosper your undertaking, whatever it may be!"

"*Ave Maria sanctissima.* Amen," replied the old servant, as he took the Signora's hand reverentially in his own, and pressed it to his lips. A tear shone in his sunken eye as he looked at her faded and grief-worn countenance; and his heart was lifted up in earnest prayer that he might be permitted to return, and bring joy and gladness where now sorrow and mourning held their sway.

Six days had elapsed since Francesco's departure; and Signora Griffi was sitting with Isabel and Juana in the bower which the old Venetian had twined for them in their flower-garden. They were talking of Marco, —they seldom spoke on any other subject,—and tears were in their eyes, and sorrow lay heavy on their hearts.

"I hear Francesco," said the blind child, whose power of discerning footsteps at a distance was very surprising. "I hear Francesco coming; and he walks so fast that I am sure he brings good news."

"What good news can he bring to me now, my child?" replied the Signora. "Alas, none!"

But the old servant now appeared, coming down the tangled shrubbery walk, and hurrying towards them with so much speed that his limbs seemed hardly able to carry him; and when he reached the bower, agitation and fatigue almost deprived him of the power of speech.

"Oh, Signora!" he gasped out, while tears of joy ran down his furrowed cheeks and fell on his flowing beard. "Oh, my dear mistress! The blessed Virgin has heard our prayers! All the good angels have prospered my going! The young master is alive!" And unable to say another word, he sank down on a low stool, and fairly sobbed like a child.

It were needless to describe the intense agitation and excitement that were caused by this sudden announcement: or to tell how Juana clung to the good old man, and lavished her tears, her thanks, and her caresses upon him, as the bearer of such good tidings. It was long before the Signora could understand or believe the mercy that had been vouchsafed to her; and longer still before Isabel—the only one of the party who retained any composure—could induce

Francesco to give a connected account of what had occurred.

His narration was very long: and had not the subject of it been one of deep interest, it might have been tedious. The substance of it was as follows:—

The old servant had repaired to Milan, having traced the report of Marco's pardon to a *vetturino,* who had come from thence to Florence, and had returned immediately. With some trouble he discovered this man; and found from him that his informant was the *curé* of the parish, whose office it was occasionally to visit the state prisons. He was also confessor to the *vetturino,* and sometimes favoured him with his company on occasion of a christening, or any other little family festivity. Such an occasion had recently occurred: and as the good man and his spiritual pastor sat together over a bottle of *vins du pays* and a cigar, the conversation had turned upon the recent trial and executions.

"Well," observed the priest, "though it was for rebellion that he was tried, and though he so obstinately refused to confess, yet I was glad that one of the prisoners escaped."

The *vetturino* said that he was greatly surprised at this announcement, which the *curé* assured him was correct. But as he was not acquainted with either of the rebels, he had not inquired the name of the more fortunate one.

Guided by his new friend, and introduced by him, Francesco had obtained an interview with the *curé*, and from him he had learned all the particulars respecting Marco's being led to execution, and then spared, and removed to Turin (with which we are already acquainted), and which the priest supposed had been communicated to his mother by the monk who attended him on the occasion. He expressed great surprise that she should still remain in ignorance of these facts; for Father Bernardo was a stranger to him, and had not enlightened him as to his intentions and their motives.

He made no comments, however, upon the Dominican's conduct; probably believing, in his *esprit de corps*, that an ecclesiastic of his imposing appearance must have a good reason for all his actions. But he mentioned having seen Marco Griffi give a note into Bernardo's hand after they returned to the prison, and entreat him, in God's name, to deliver it safely and speedily to his mother.

"Had I doubted her receiving it," added the *curé*, kindly; "I would myself have conveyed the happy news to her by letter. It is strange, very strange, that she should have been kept thus ignorant."

The fact that Griffi had been conveyed from Milan to Turin, Francesco had ascertained beyond a doubt; but further than that he could learn no tidings of him. The general belief seemed to be that he was still in

confinement in that city. The old servant had felt that it would be a useless delay to travel thither; and therefore he had hastened back to Florence to gladden his mistress's heart with the information he had succeeded in obtaining, and to wait with her for further tidings, when Marco should have the power of sending them.

From Father Jerome, Bernardo afterwards heard that the truth had reached Signora Griffi; and he very prudently refrained from giving to him any explanation of his proceedings. Bernardo never gave any account of his actions to any human being, except his superior; and to him, only such an account as it suited himself to render up. Neither did he again make his appearance at the Villa Anzilotti. Signora Griffi's reproaches would have been unpleasant to him; and he felt some little dread of encountering Isabel's flashing eye, and calm, commanding manner, which, on becoming occasions, she knew so well how to assume. To the Signora's request, conveyed through Jerome, that her son's letter might be delivered to her, no reply was vouchsafed; and she was compelled to rest satisfied with the knowledge that Marco lived, and with the hope that ere long she should again be blessed with his presence.

CHAPTER XX.

"WHAT is it," says an accomplished writer, "that gives to all beauty, animate or inanimate, a tinge of melancholy? The greater the beauty, the deeper the tinge. Is it an instinct of mortality, the 'bright must fade' of the poet? Or is it a vague yearning for something more perfect still? a longing of the soul for the unattainable, which, more than all the philosophy in the universe, argues the necessity of a future state."

Who has not experienced what is here so well expressed? Who has not turned away from a surpassingly beautiful view, with a tearful eye and a bursting heart, and wondered why, even in a scene so lovely, the spirit should be unsatisfied? Surely this is, as our author suggests above, because the soul does yearn for something more perfect still. Because nothing finite can ever satisfy a being that is made to enjoy the infinite: and when men have looked on all that is most exquisite in nature, they find an empty void still craving for something higher and more exalted; and then the spirit falls back upon the hope of immortality, when every desire shall be satisfied, and every noble taste shall receive its highest gratification for ever.

Such were the feelings that animated all our Swiss travellers on many occasions when they beheld the glory and the magnificence of Alpine scenery; and such were especially Kate's emotions when gazing at the glacier of Grindelwald, of which she had vainly attempted to make a sketch. She threw down her pencil and book in despair, and walked away from the rest of the party, to enjoy in solitude the excess of happiness which she derived from such a scene.

Close at the foot of the mighty, the everlasting, glacier, there bloomed a little flower. It was nourished by the ever-trickling stream that flowed from a deep cavern, formed by massy blocks of sea-green ice; and its wax-like blossoms of bright lilac and yellow, and its delicate leaves, were a touching contrast to the stern and frozen rocks that overhung it. How lovely it looked, and how frail! Why was it there? thought Kate, as she stooped and gathered the flower, and looked from its delicate beauty to the magnificent grandeur of the scenery around. Had the mighty God of nature,—He at whose bidding the mountains arose, and the desolating avelanche was arrested in its course, —had He placed it there, and caused it to put forth those brilliant blossoms, to please the eye, and to touch the heart, and to speak to the soul of the casual passer-by? Yes, it is true—and it is a truth as deeply interesting and instructive, as it is too often lightly regarded,—that the God of power and might is also

the God of love and mercy; and that the Creator of the universe, whose stupendous works call forth our highest praise and wonder, has also formed and painted the little flower, and the gay butterfly, to grace and adorn his greater works, and to excite the love of his intelligent creatures, by gifts that might have been deemed trifling or superfluous.

But what, let us ask ourselves, are the benefits that most readily call forth our lively and tender affection towards our fellow-creatures? Are they magnificent gifts, or even costly sacrifices? Are they not rather the word of sympathy, the look of kindness, the little act of attention, which owe all their value to the motive that prompted them? And thus it appears that God acts towards His creatures. Thus He deigns to invite our love; and while He says, "My son, give me thine heart," He not only lays upon us benefits, the magnitude of which the tongue of an angel could not describe; but He also does for us all those acts of kindness and sympathy that are best calculated to awaken our hearts' affections and convince us that He "knows our frames," and does not despise even our simplest tastes and inclinations. Why otherwise has He decked the field, the wilderness, the mountain, and even the cold glacier, with flowers of every varied hue? Why is the song of the birds so melodious to our ears? We might have lived with none of these gratifications; but our Father has given them, and countless others,

because He loves us, and because He would have our love in return.

Such were Kate's musings beneath the glacier of Grindelwald; and such they often were in every scene of beauty. But more of sadness mingled with her feelings just now than she had ever experienced before. Poor Kate! she was fighting a hard battle; and though she often thought she had gained a victory, yet the enemy rose up again ever and anon as strong as before, and the struggle had to be begun again. How could it be otherwise, when circumstances were so much against her, and when each day gave her reason to admire and to approve of her cousin Marco still more? She had never met with any one who seemed so well to understand her somewhat original ideas, or who so often expressed the very sentiment or opinion which had just occurred to her own mind.

This kind of sympathy was very fascinating; but Kate felt it to be so dangerous, that she did not often allow of any opportunity for its manifestation. Still opportunities did sometimes occur: perhaps Marco sought them; and then she did her best to carry on a conversation with him, with as much indifference as she would have shown to any one else.

It happened that Marco had also attempted a sketch of the glaciers and the adjoining cliffs, and he had succeeded to his own satisfaction; or at all events, he ceased his efforts very soon after Kate left her seat, and went

to explore the icy cavern, and the precipitous rocks. A similarity of taste drew him to the same spot where she stood looking at the little Alpine flower; and a similarity of feeling led him into the same train of thought. Perhaps the expression of her countenance, as he approached her, suggested the same reflections to him which surrounding objects had awakened in her mind.

He expressed those thoughts; and Kate was both surprised and pleased to find what a change had taken place in his feelings with regard to serious subjects, and how much more fully he now agreed with her on many points than when they used to converse together, and often to hold long and well-contested arguments at Florence. She rejoiced in this, and she felt assured that the good work, once begun, would doubtless be carried on in his soul. And yet a certain feeling of sadness mingled with her satisfaction, as she reflected that, had his heart been free, and,—as she had fancied at Florence—ready to be offered in exchange for hers, no obstacle would now have remained to her happiness. She blushed deeply at the thought. She often did so in solitude: for there was shame to a high pure spirit like hers, in the consciousness that she had suffered herself to mistake the common courtesies of life for the expression of a warmer feeling, and had given her heart's affections where only friendship had been demanded. She did not try to soften the bitter-

ness of this feeling by blaming Marco, or accusing him of having intentionally shown a preference for her that he did not really feel. She entertained too high an opinion of him to allow of her admitting such an idea into her mind; and she preferred acknowledging to herself, that her own hasty judgment and impetuous feelings had been to blame, rather than believing that Marco Griffi could do aught that was not generous, high-minded, and noble.

The manners of the country might also have tended to mislead her. When she first became acquainted with Marco, she was unaccustomed to the deferential attentions so often shown towards the weaker sex by well-bred men on the Continent; and it was not much to be wondered at, if she fancied there was more in the young Italian's look and manner, than common politeness demanded. As a mere drawing-master, neither she nor any of her family had ever regarded him. There was a something in his air, and in his conversation, that at once convinced them that he was a gentleman, in every sense of the word; and had he not himself drawn back, and declined many opportunities of improving the intimacy to which he was admitted, especially by Mr. Aubrey, he might have been on terms of friendship with all the party before he so suddenly disappeared from their social circle. It was, therefore, clear to Kate,—or at all events, she told herself that it was,—that Marco Griffi had in no way been to blame.

It might have been unwise in her parents to allow her to see so much of so admirable a specimen of human nature; it might have been hasty in her to form so quickly so high an estimate of his good qualities; it might have been her own personal vanity that led her to believe he had formed almost an equally high estimate of hers; when all the while he was devoted to another, and that other, she deemed in her humility, far superior to herself in every way. All these causes might be responsible for the sorrow which weighed so heavily on her heart; but Marco was blameless, and he should never have reason to suppose that his conduct had been misunderstood.

All these thoughts passed through Kate's active mind, far more rapidly than we can write them, and the result of them was, that she resolved to be more familiar and unreserved with her cousin, and even to try and lead him to talk of Isabel, and of his engagement to her. She felt that it would be a great relief to her, and would render their intercourse much more easy and cousin-like, if the fact of his being betrothed were openly acknowledged between them. So she began to talk to Marco of his mother; intending, by an easy transition, to pass on to his mother's wards.

"It is strange," said Griffi, in reply to an inquiry from Kate; "it is very strange, that I have received no tidings from my mother in answer to the hasty letter I wrote on the day of my mock execution, to apprise

her of my life having been spared. I gave it to Father Bernardo, the very monk who betrayed poor Rosa Ruffini's confession, and caused all our misfortunes. But his plans had succeeded, and ours had been frustrated, and he could have had no motive for refusing me so trifling a favour as conveying my note to my mother. I told her to write to me to Geneva; and I know that Mr. Aubrey has also written to her since I had the happiness of meeting you here, and still there is no reply. Would to God I could return to Florence, and comfort her anxious heart, which is too much wrapped up in her unlucky son!"

"Unlucky! Marco—why?" said Kate, hastily; for she thought his prospects were very peculiarly bright and happy, in spite of his present exile from his home. Then she added, without waiting for a reply; "yes, it is true, you have been unfortunate in some things; but the future will make ample amends for the past. No doubt it is very trying to be kept here just now, when you must desire so earnestly to return to the Villa Anzilotti. I wish Isabel,—I mean your mother and both the Signorinas,—were here. How this fine air and magnificent scenery would revive them after the heat of Florence, and all the anxiety and alarm they have suffered on your account!"

"Yes," replied Marco, warmly; for he felt that if his mother were at Geneva, he should make it an excuse for indulging himself still longer in the luxury of

remaining near the Aubreys. "Oh, that I had a magician's wand, to transport them all to this glorious country! Even the blind Juana would feel its beauty, and Isabel—the enthusiastic Isabel—she would appreciate it as you do, Kate."

His cousin looked suddenly round at this remark. She had been busily engaged in gathering specimens of moss from the cliff, close by which they were standing. It was a look of inquiry; and Marco replied to it immediately, but rather as if speaking to himself.

"It certainly is so. There is a very strong resemblance at times. I beg your pardon, Kate; perhaps you will think it no compliment to be considered like an Italian; but there is something in you that reminds me so forcibly of Isabel Anzilotti. I observed it the first time I saw you in the Palazzo Brignole, at Geneva. It was the expression of your eyes, as you looked so admiringly at that picture of Vandyke's, that recalled to my mind a face that was very familiar to me. When I was so much with you in those happy weeks at Florence, I forgot that you were like any one but yourself; but now I see it again. Poor Isabel! I fear she has gone through a great deal lately."

I have no doubt she has, *thought* Kate; but she did not say the words, though she wished she had the courage to do so. And now, she thought also, I perceive why my good cousin showed me so much more attention at Florence than he did to Ethel. It was all

because he discovered, or fancied in me some resemblance to his beautiful Isabel. Well, that may be flattering in one way, but not in another. I should prefer being admired for what I am in myself, and not because I am a humble likeness of some other individual. I wish I had known at the time why it was that I so often caught Marco's eyes fixed musingly on me. It would have spared me the trouble of blushing, as I fear, I frequently did. Perhaps those foolish blushes may have told him the truth : a truth, I would rather die than he should even suspect. He shall not think it now. He shall never know that I once thought —yes, believed, that he loved me!

And, strong in this valiant determination, she continued to talk of Isabel, of her beauty, her talents, her devotion to her blind sister, with as much ease of manner as she could command; while Marco, who had not the remotest idea that she considered the subject peculiarly interesting to him, replied with much warmth to her eulogiums of his young and lovely Italian friend. He thus still more confirmed Kate in her conviction that Isabel was one day to be her cousin, and also in her resolution to hide from Marco any sign that such a conviction was distasteful to her.

On returning to Geneva from this expedition to Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald, letters were found from Reginald, and also from Janet, announcing that the day was fixed for the commencement of their journey

to Switzerland. Some friends of Mrs. Aubrey's were going very opportunely to Paris; and the young people were to travel thither in their company, and remain for a few days at the same hotel, in order that Janet might not suffer from the fatigue of too hasty a journey. She spoke of herself as much stronger than she had been in the spring, and as anticipating, with great delight, being able to join in all her cousin's mountain expeditions. But Reginald's letter was written in a less hopeful strain. He considered his cousin much changed, and feared that neither her mind nor her body would ever regain their former tone. Sorrow and disappointment, and the want of kindly care and sympathy, had borne too heavily upon a naturally feeble constitution. He could but hope that entire change, and the society of those she loved so well, might work wonders in restoring her health and spirits.

No letters awaited Marco from his mother. (And why none from Isabel either? thought Kate.) Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey were as much astonished as their nephew was at this prolonged silence; and again they despatched a packet of letters of inquiry to the Villa Anzilotti.

They might have spared themselves that trouble; for it did not suit the present policy of Father Bernardo that Signora Griffi should receive any further tidings of her rebellious and contumacious son. Of course, therefore, she did not receive any; and of course, also,

she could not write to him, for she knew nothing of his present place of abode. To her brother and sister-in-law she wrote, and addressed her despatches as desired to Geneva; but all her letters were in the possession of Father Bernardo in the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella, at Florence, where it seemed likely they would remain.

CHAPTER XXI.

A VERY interesting excursion had been planned to Interlachen, and from thence to the lake of Brientz, the falls of the Giesbach, and other spots of peculiar attraction; but this was deferred until the arrival of Reginald and Janet, that they also might enjoy the anticipated pleasure. Meanwhile the party at Geneva found quite sufficient objects in the more immediate neighbourhood, to keep their time and their pencils in full employ.

All Kate's love for sketching had returned in full force; and her former drawing-master was always ready to give her his instructions, and to point out the subjects best adapted to her powers. Sometimes he selected points of view at some distance from those which Ethel and her father, who was also an artist, had chosen; no doubt for the sake of securing a variety of sketches, and Kate could not object to this arrangement. Then Marco talked to her, and sometimes he read aloud to her; and whether he talked or read, he always chose subjects that interested her, and drew out her thoughts and feelings; and that also

showed her, more and more, how well their minds were calculated to rouse and improve each other, both where they agreed and where they differed. These *tête-à-têtes* were very agreeable, and the time thus spent passed very rapidly. But did Kate become more happy, and more like her former self? Her mother asked herself this question, and was compelled to answer, no: and it was, therefore, with great satisfaction that she welcomed her son and Janet when they arrived at the villa: for she hoped now to break up the quiet fascinating life of comparative idleness which they had been living since their return from Grindelwald. She well knew and appreciated the old saying, that "Idleness is the mother of mischief;" and she feared it was just now proving but too true. The sooner Kate had other occupations, and other companions to divide her interest, the better it might be for her future peace.

All the party were agreeably surprised at Janet's appearance on her arrival. Her short stay in Paris had rested and amused her; and the excitement of meeting her aunt and uncle, and cousins, who all shared her affections, gave a colour to her cheek and an animation to her eye that had long been absent from them at Altringham. Reginald thought that he had viewed her indisposition too seriously: and all began cheerfully to prepare for their temporary removal to Interlachen.

The arrival of Janet also produced a very beneficial effect on Kate, for it drew her out of herself and her own reflections, and turned her thoughts into another current. She talked to Janet much of Marco; and seemed pleased to observe the favourable impression which she immediately formed of him. But she spoke also much of his mother, and of his affianced bride and her interesting blind sister; and she did so with such ease and apparent coolness, that Janet never then suspected that she felt a deeper interest in Marco Griffi than was natural towards a newly-found and very agreeable relative.

The black dog, Viking, was also a most welcome addition to the party. His wild joy at seeing his old friends, and especially his favourite, Kate, was warmly reciprocated by all; and the manner in which he received Marco's advances,—so different to his usually very cool treatment of strangers,—proved to his young mistress that he was a dog of peculiar discrimination, and added to the estimation in which she already held him.

Ruth, too, was very kindly received by the Aubreys, and well cared for by Watson, the ladies'-maid, with whom she had already become well acquainted at Altringham. In short, every one of the party, high or low, seemed happy. If cares there were in any breast, —and where is the happy individual who has no cares, or *ought not* to have them?—but if cares there were in

this large family group, they seemed at least to be put out of sight for the present; and all set off in high spirits, and in bright sunshine, for Interlachen.

We will not trace their journey step by step. It was performed leisurely and agreeably as their former excursions had been; for they preferred travelling over the same ground more than once, and returning to their pretty residence at Geneva to rest awhile, instead of making one continuous tour through the country. On Janet's account, this plan seemed now still more desirable, as it would subject her to less fatigue, and also give her more time to derive the full benefit of the pure air and invigorating climate of the borders of Lake Leman.

Interlachen had, of late years, lost the quiet and retired appearance that once rendered it so attractive. But it cannot lose its surrounding beauties; and it must always be a most delightful place for the head-quarters of tourists, who, like the Aubreys, wish to make excursions, and return again to a comfortable residence.

One day was given to the immediate neighbourhood, and then the party set off in open carriages to the border of the lake of Brientz, where a commodious boat awaited them, in which they were rowed over the clear dark water, and from whence they enjoyed a full view of the lofty and precipitous mountains which enclose this small lake on every side, and are in many places

clothed with thick wood even to the water's edge. When just opposite to the little town of Brientz, they landed; and then mounted by a gradual winding ascent to the spot where the whole grandeur of the majestic cataract breaks upon the view. The roaring mass of waters takes five distinct leaps in its headlong passage from the summit of the mountain to the dark basin into which it plunges at the foot of the precipice; and all these falls are visible from the station to which the guides conduct the travellers. The dark green hue of the fir-trees, that clothe the rocky mountain sides, forms a fine contrast to the white foam of the troubled water as it dashes up on high in beautiful wrath at the impediments it meets with in its downward course. The Alpine ranges that surround the lake rise in every varied form of bold precipice and wooded slope; and behind them are other mountains, chain beyond chain, and peak rising above peak, until the most distant snowy ranges fade away among the fleecy clouds of evening, or are lost in the haze of a summer's noon.

On the day on which the Aubreys' party visited this very striking spot, the sky was of an unclouded blue, with that look of infinite distance that is so remarkable in the pure atmosphere of mountain regions. The most profound stillness reigned around. The surface of the lake, far beneath them, shone like a mirror of polished steel, unbroken even by a passing boat; for none were visible except the one which had brought

our travellers from Interlachen, and which now lay idly on the border of the lake. Every object was reflected with distinctness in the dark waters; and even the wild bird that darted across from one rocky boundary to the other, might see its own image reflected in the clear blue depths beneath it.

Long did the Aubreys stand and gaze, with ever-increasing interest and admiration, on the glorious scene. They did not speak, and only the roar of falling waters broke the universal stillness. For once Kate's most vivid anticipations were surpassed, her highest imaginings were almost realized, and her heart swelled nearly to bursting. Existence at that moment seemed perfect happiness; and yet tears were dimming her eyes, and her every pulse was throbbing with excitement. With one long sigh she heaved the weight of intense and almost oppressive enjoyment off her heart, and turned to join the rest of the party in a nearer examination of the separate falls.

Marco's eye was upon her. Its glance responded to all the feelings that seemed to choke her utterance; but he did not attempt just then to express them. Why was it always in him, thought Kate, that she found such sympathy of sentiment? And did Isabel experience the same? Did she too think, and feel, and perceive so very much in unison with Marco? If not, it was surely a pity that she was to be his companion for life, and walk through the journey of

existence by his side. Just then poor Kate felt a pang of something very like the demon *jealousy;* and it brought her back from the high flight to which her imagination and her feelings had been soaring. Such flights are not meant to be very continuous in this world. For that enduring joy we must *wait!*

The whole of that summer's afternoon was spent at the falls of the Giesbach; and it was a bright day, long to be remembered by all who then enjoyed it. As evening drew on, our travellers, who had wandered in several groups hither and thither in search of pictorial, or geological, or botanical treasures, drew together on a sort of platform, about midway between the highest and the lowest fall. From thence the view was singularly grand; and the excitement of first impressions having subsided, all were disposed to discuss and to compare those impressions, and to rest both mind and body after the unwonted fatigue to which they had been subjected.

By-and-by, from a small *châlet,* nearly hidden among dark fir-trees, and overhanging chestnuts, and projecting rocks, a very interesting party emerged. An old man in a dark and quaintly-cut suit, and with long white hair, led the way, holding by the hand a little curly-headed child, and followed by a group of sons and daughters and grandchildren of various ages.

They all placed themselves on some rocks at the further end of the platform, and formed a *tableau* of no

little grace and unstudied effect, which was greatly heightened by the addition of several goats that gathered around them and lay at their feet, while one favourite kid stood behind the venerable patriarch of the family, its neck encircled by the arms of the fair-haired child.

While our travellers gazed at the picturesque group, and wondered what would follow, they were almost startled by the suddenness with which the voices of the whole party broke forth in a wild Swiss melody. The harmony of the voices was perfect, and the airs they sang most sweet and thrilling. It seemed as if the spirit of the scene, which had hitherto only spoken in the deep bass of the ever-rolling waters, had now vouchsafed to call other music to her aid, in order to complete the magical effect of the whole. And it *was* complete.

Now and then the singers paused, and then their entranced audience seemed to breathe again, and murmurs of applause broke forth. But when again they chanted forth their national hymns or mountain war-songs, every tongue was mute, and every eye was fixed, and an almost breathless attention was given to these Alpine minstrels. Even Viking, whose restless spirit of investigation had hitherto kept him in perpetual motion, now at length lay tranquilly at the feet of his mistress, and seemed to share with her the soothing effect of music's magic sound.

We are told that Luther once, when listening to some beautiful singing, exclaimed, with enthusiasm, "If our Lord God has scattered such admirable gifts on this earth, what will it not be in the life eternal, in which all will be perfection!" And such was the feeling that pervaded all our party during the happy hour they spent in listening to the Alpine singers, as their clear voices rose above the roaring water, and mingled with it in one rich harmony.

Kate felt that she could have sat there for ever. She dreaded the moment that must put an end to the sweet enchantment, and impress upon her more strongly the sad and ever-recurring conviction, that there were elements in that day's happiness which she must not, and ought not to hope ever to enjoy again. *All* she loved best were there around her, and nothing but her own thoughts had occurred to mar the perfect serenity of her heart; nothing to arouse painful comparisons; nothing to interfere with the companionship she so dearly prized, and felt she was so soon to lose. No, nothing but her own painful recollection that there was another whom Marco would, even on that happy day, have preferred to her as his companion, had shed one drop of bitterness into her heart. The very air she breathed was enchantment. Kate loved space—boundless space. She exulted in the physical sense of free respiration, and the mental sense of perfect liberty that she experienced in mountain scenery. All through

her life *space* had been a sort of passion with her. No building, no square, that she had ever seen but had disappointed her by its limited extent. No hills that she had climbed in England had ever given her more than a very partial satisfaction. But in Switzerland her taste for lofty eminences and extended views was almost gratified; and she even ceased, while gazing at a snow-covered range of distant Alps, from some lofty mountain platform, to sigh for the far-off Himalayahs or the gigantic Andes.

In such situations her whole figure seemed to dilate with inward joy. Her step was firm and elastic, and her earnest eyes sparkled with a fire that was not ever aroused, except by strong emotion. And in such moments Kate lived as much of real, sentient life, as many phlegmatic individuals do in whole years of tranquil monotonous days. We know which disposition we deem most to be envied! Kate, and all such as Kate, may certainly suffer more keenly than their fellow-creatures of less sensitive temperaments. Assuredly they do so. But their enjoyments are proportionally more vivid; and they find pleasures—real and exalted pleasures—where others would perceive nothing to attract their observation.

> "Nothing is lost on him who sees
> With an eye that feeling gave;
> For him there's a story in every breeze,
> And a picture in every wave!"

And many were the stories and the pictures that Kate stored up in her active brain wherever she went, and kept there for future use and enjoyment; and on no day of her young life had she ever added so largely to her collection, as on that day at Giesbach falls.

The day's collection was not, however, yet complete. The sun, as he sank glowing towards the horizon, warned the travellers to depart, and the family of musicians ceased their songs. Silence again reigned over the scene: silence, that is, as regards the voice of animated nature. But nature has other voices, and how sweet they are; and how melodious! The evening breeze had sprung up, and came sighing over the hills, and through the valleys. The leaves of the trees and the grass on the hill-side were in motion, and they rustled sweetly in reply. The surface of the lake was stirred, and went rippling to the shore, and plashing over the rounded pebbles. And through all, and beneath all, was the rushing, mighty, ceaseless cataract, with its majestic voice of power. And all those voices were in harmony; not one note of discord mingled with the whole. Who, indeed, ever detected such a note among the whole range of natural sounds? From the roaring bass of the thunder's clap, to the gentle dropping rain that follows its last faint reverberation; from the crash of the avelanche, to the fall of the rustling autumn leaves; who ever found one of nature's own musical instruments utter one single sound that

was out of tune, or join the general concert in a wrong key?

Slowly and reluctantly our party left the hill-side, and wound down the path that led to the water's edge. They were silent, for they were weary, and they feared to lose the sound of the cataract, which became fainter and fainter at every turn in the winding pathway.

Suddenly a cry arose! All stood motionless, and gazed around to discover whence that unearthly sound proceeded. Oh! what a thrilling sound it was! It seemed to rise higher and higher with a wild shrill tone,—and yet how unutterably sweet!—until it pierced the very sky, and the eyes and the hearts of the hearers followed it there. Then, as they looked upwards, they saw the Alpine minstrels standing on the very edge of a precipice, far, far above their heads; and they knew that the strange wild cry they had heard was the native *Ranz-des-Vaches*, given with peculiar melody and effect, and under very advantageous circumstances.

It ceased, and the mountain echoes took it up, and softly repeated it, until the last faint sound died away across the lake; and Kate heaved a deep sigh, for she said within herself, "I shall never hear that heavenly sound again!" But Kate was wrong, as she often was, when she formed her rapid conclusions. Once again that cry arose; and once again the travellers held their breath, and stood in motionless attention. Then the sound died away; the shades of evening fell on the

descending path, and the brightness of that bright day was past.

Would any of the days that followed it shine with such a light again? Who could say? Who can ever say?

CHAPTER XXII.

Our travellers returned again to Geneva, and to their less exciting mode of life; intending, after some days of quiet, again to set forth in search of "the picturesque and beautiful." The last excursion had seemed to inspire Janet with new life; and her faithful handmaiden, Ruth, who had accompanied her to Interlachen, was eloquent in praise of the Swiss air, and the pleasant companions that had wrought such a happy change in so short a time. Janet could walk for miles on the borders of the lake with her cousins, and watch the active and graceful movements of their favourite Viking, as he dashed into the water to seek for different objects that were thrown far over its surface by Reginald or Marco. She could ride or drive to more distant spots, and spend hours in sketching or botanizing, and not complain of fatigue. And she could do what she enjoyed more than all, pass nearly the whole day in one of the open boats, with gay awnings, that abounded on the lake, and that conveyed the whole party from side to side of its wide expanse of water; landing them at some sweet shady spot, to dine in the open air, and

carrying them back, as evening closed in, to their picturesque villa on its shore.

How sweetly did the united voices of the young cousins sound, as they joined in glees and choruses, while they skimmed lightly over the water of the lake, or sat beneath the trees on its verdant brink! Never had Janet heard Kate's soft *contralto* give such effect to the part she took, as now, when it was mingled with and supported by that of Marco.

But these pleasant summer days must soon come to an end; these sweet family concerts must be broken up. A cloud was on Marco Griffi's brow, and day by day it grew darker; for day by day the hour drew nearer when he must bid adieu to all that now gave life its greatest value, and from which common prudence and self-respect warned him to flee.

He again declared his intention of going for some weeks to the mountain retreat of the Waldenses; where, as he observed, he should not feel himself altogether a stranger, as he was acquainted with the pastor who occasionally visited Isabel: and in his district, he should find some of his young friend's relatives, who would show him hospitality and friendship for her sake. Possibly, also, he might from thence send to Florence, and obtain intelligence of his mother, for which he grew daily more anxious. He did not say that his heart was yearning for some communication with his beautiful betrothed; but there was a look of sadness

in his eye, and a restless, perturbed manner in all he said and did, that told Kate only too plainly why he was so resolved to leave Geneva, and to go where some intercourse with the Villa Anzilotti might be practicable.

It seems wonderful how two persons may thus go on rendering themselves and one another thoroughly miserable; merely from the influence of some preconceived notion, which colours and distorts everything they see and hear, and makes it appear to be a confirmation of all they most keenly dread. Could some benign fairy have appeared with her magic wand, and removed from the eyes and the hearts of Marco and his cousin the veil that enshrouded them, and shown to each the deep earnest feelings of the other, what happiness would have been the result! What a glow of warm bright sunshine would have illumined the past, the present, and the future! Whereas now, the past was full of doubt and misgivings; the present was troubled by conflict and by dread; and the future was one dreary expanse of blighted feeling, and grey-tinged disappointment.

Unfortunately, the same misconception had taken firm possession of the minds of the whole family; so that, instead of helping one another to a glimpse of the true state of things, each confirmed the other in their erroneous view. Had not Reginald felt the subject to be one of too much interest to himself, to admit

of his alluding to it with becoming coolness, he would long ago have rallied his cousin about his lovely *fiancée*, and reproached him for his unfriendly reserve, in not speaking openly of his happiness. But his lips were sealed when Isabel was mentioned; and his constant effort was to crush and annihilate every remembrance of her that now made it torture to him to think of her engagement to Marco.

The day preceding that which was fixed for Marco's departure, was devoted to a visit to the Castle of Chillon and its neighbourhood. The interest attached to that spot rendered this expedition one which all anticipated with pleasure; nor were they disappointed. The dungeon which our great poet has rendered so memorable was duly inspected, and all that was worth seeing in the gloomy castle was examined; and then the chill prison atmosphere, and the oppressive darkness, were gladly exchanged for the free soft air, and the cheering sunshine of Lake Leman's shores.

The morning had been peculiarly bright and clear; and as the travellers glided, in their commodious boat, across the lake, they remarked that they had never seen the towns and villas on the shore, or the mountains that formed so noble and varied a background to the scene, with such distinctness. But the afternoon became very sultry; and Janet, who was sensitive to every change in the atmosphere, complained of great languor and weakness. She refused, however, to allow

the party to return home on her account; and she reclined on a couch of shawls and cushions, listening to the conversation of the more active groups around her, and amused by the gambols of Viking.

Kate did not employ her pencil. She was too restless to settle to any occupation; and she could not venture on anything which might throw her and Marco together. So she watched for a short time the more steady and persevering Ethel, who was making a very good sketch of the castle; and then, asserting that the heat was too great for drawing, she seated herself beside Janet, and read to her in a low sweet voice, until the exhausted girl fell into a quiet slumber.

No one felt gay; and no one pretended to feel so. The air was heavy, and some hearts were heavy too: and a long silence ensued. Presently the stillness was broken by a very faint and distant sound, that might be thunder, or might be only the reverberation of the fall of an avelanche far away among the mountain-glens.

It aroused the attention of Mr. Aubrey, and he observed that the sky was no longer so clear as it had hitherto been, and that dark clouds seemed slowly rising behind the distant peaks. It was time to set out on their return, as rain might probably fall after sunset. No change was apprehended sooner, for none of the party had yet experienced the suddenness with which storms come down on that deceitful lake; but

the boatmen came up from the shore, and hurried their movements, remarking that they hoped they should have time to get them back to their villa before the clouds broke over the mountains.

The sun was still shining when they embarked, and placed themselves beneath the awning; but soon a bank of heavy clouds, that looked almost as solid and dark as the range of Alps behind which they rose, gradually ascended from the west, and met the sinking orb, and shrouded him from view. At the same moment a clap of thunder, long and loud, burst forth. It was echoed and re-echoed from side to side of the lake; and ere it died away, another and another crash succeeded, that seemed to rend the very heavens. The whole sky was now overcast, and the darkness became strangely deep. But it was broken by frequent flashes of very vivid lightning, that seemed almost to blind the boatmen and the passengers, and caused every nerve in poor Janet's frame to start and quiver. She had always been greatly affected by thunder and lightning, and this was a storm far exceeding in violence anything she had ever before experienced.

Mrs. Aubrey sat near her, and tried to soothe her agitation, and inspire her with calmness; and Ethel sought to hide the brilliance of the forked lightning from her averted gaze. But terror took possession of her; and they feared that she would faint away before they could get her to a place of more secure shelter.

Had she not felt anxious about her cousin, Kate would have enjoyed intensely this wild war of the elements. She knew no fear such as now shook Janet from head to foot; and the sense of danger, the sense of being beyond the reach of human aid or protection, and safe —if safe at all—only through the immediate guardianship of the Almighty, was to her a high and elevating feeling. She forgot all the cares that had saddened her through the day; and she only felt that she was an immortal being in the hand of an all-powerful God, and that the roaring thunder, the raging wind, and the dashing waves, were but the creatures of His power.

The wind had indeed risen wildly; and the waters of the lake, so lately calm and unbroken as a mirror, were now tossed on high in curling foamy waves. Every effort was made to screen poor Janet from the force of the chilling wind and the dashing spray; but the boatmen insisted on the passengers keeping their seats, as they said the safety of all might depend on the balance of the little vessel not being disturbed, and the slight awning afforded a very imperfect shelter. Both Marco and Reginald lent their aid in the management of the boat; and it was well that they were there with cool nerves and strong resolution to render assistance to the crew, for they would otherwise have been quite unequal to the task before them. But they wrought manfully at the oars, ever and anon lifting up their heads, and casting keen inquiring glances at the

angry sky, or uttering a few words of encouragement to the anxious passengers.

The storm continued with unabated force; and, in spite of all that her kind companions could do to prevent it, the driving rain fell through and under the frail awning, and drenched the shivering and affrighted Janet. Viking seemed to feel that on her the care of all the party ought to be concentrated, and he lay beside her, sheltering her in some sort from the searching blast, and keeping warmth in her chilled limbs; and now and then looking up in her face with eyes that seemed to express pity for her sufferings, and sometimes uttering a low wail, as if of sympathy.

Slowly the labouring boat proceeded. But it did proceed: and in time the landing place appeared through the thick falling rain and the blinding spray. The wind blew off the shore, and the waves that were driven back against the little vessel impeded its progress, and caused it to pitch and roll even more heavily than it had done in the open expanse of the lake.

One of the boatmen, a grey-haired veteran, with limbs that seemed inured to wrestling with the storm, and eyes like those of a mountain eagle, took the boathook which lay in the bottom, and with a steady step advanced to the bow of the vessel. There he took his stand, erect and motionless, awaiting the moment when he might hope to plunge the hook into the stony

beach, and steady the rocking boat. Several times the rowers forced it onward through the receding waves, and hoped they had gained the shore. But again and again the bow was lifted high by the swelling water, and the grappling hook could take no hold, and the boat was driven back.

Anxiety now reigned in every breast; and many a silent prayer went up to Heaven from that frail bark to Him who alone could bid the waves be still, or give to His creatures the power to struggle through them to safety. No boatmen were on the shore; no human aid was nigh: and the roaring of the thunder, and the wild conflict of the wind and water, utterly prevented all hope of the crew making themselves heard by those who would have come to their assistance.

Mr. Aubrey took Janet in his arms, and raised her up, that she might be ready the moment there was a chance of lifting her from the boat; and the half-fainting girl roused herself, and strove to smile in reply to the kind words that were uttered, and the tender solicitude that was shown for her by all her companions: but when she glanced around, and became still more sensible of the peril of their situation, her large blue eyes gleamed with terror, and her pale lips quivered.

For a moment the violence of the wind subsided, and the retreating waves came back with less resistless force. The boatmen drove the rocking vessel right

ahead; and as they neared the shore, Marco and Reginald plunged the long poles, armed with spikes, with which the boat was furnished, deep into the sand. There was a pause; and Janet sprang wildly up, and strove to rush forward. The boat was not firmly fixed; the balance was lost, and Janet's trembling limbs could not support her. Her uncle threw himself forward, to catch her in his arms; but it was too late. She tottered, and fell over the side of the boat, and sank beneath the heavy wave that came rolling off the shore.

At the scream of anguish that rose from the terrified females, the boatmen raised their oars, and the boat fell off again. A breathless interval of silence followed; and all eyes were fixed on the troubled water, to watch for what seemed the almost hopeless reappearance of the haplesss girl.

"There, there!" cried Kate; and she pointed eagerly to a dark curve between two rising waves. "I saw her arm: I see her now. She is struggling beneath the waters. O God, save her! Marco, Marco, save my poor Janet!"

She caught the arm of her cousin, and looked beseechingly in his face. He would have faced any danger, in answer to such a look as that: nor had he waited for the appeal. His coat was already off, and he was only waiting to spring into the water the moment the right direction was ascertained.

But another faithful friend was before him. Another eye was quicker than his. A plunge was heard; and Viking's black and shaggy coat was seen breaking through the foamy waves, right towards the spot where Kate had seen the uplifted arm.

Now *Sea-King!* show yourself worthy of your name. Struggle on nobly; for on you, and the good God helping you, depends the life of that fair girl!

She rose again between the waves; and the boatmen drove the vessel frantically towards her, while every voice was raised, in shrieking accents, to tell her that help was near. Could she hear those accents?

Viking bore onwards like a hero, as he was. He turned not to the right or to the left, and every eye was on him, every heart stood still. He dived. O God! he rose again alone! He looked wildly up at the frowning sky and howled, and then he dived again. More slowly he rose, and now he bore a heavy burden.

"Thank God!" was uttered from the depth of every breast, and yet all feared the gallant dog had been too late. It was a terrible moment of suspense; while the boat was impelled by main strength, and Viking swam slowly towards it. Either the storm had mercifully abated, or all were too much excited to note its raging. Nearer and nearer came the black *Sea-king;* and, in less time than it has taken to tell the tale, he bore his senseless burden within reach of the boat. Marco and Reginald seized her and drew her

in ; and, while her aunt and cousins bent over her and sought for signs of life, the boat was again brought close to the shore, and this time, to the proper landing-place, where it was firmly secured.

The thunder and the howling wind had ceased, and there was a dead silence, broken only by the pattering of the rain on the pebbly beach, as the sad procession left the boat and bent their steps to the villa. Reginald and Marco, assisted by the grey-haired helmsman, carried the apparently lifeless Janet, followed closely by the panting and eager Viking, while Mr. Aubrey supported his now trembling wife, and Ethel and Kate hurried forward to make all the necessary preparations, and to summon medical aid.

Long were the efforts of her attendants continued ere any sign of returning animation appeared to cheer their spirits, and still longer was it before the medical man could give them any decided hope of her ultimate recovery. Her delicate constitution and her recent indisposition were greatly against her; but youth was on her side, and every care that the most tender affection could prompt was lavished on her; and hope was soon in the ascendant.

CHAPTER XXIII.

For two days Marco deferred his journey; but when all immediate danger was past, he could no longer justify to himself any further delay. He saw that Kate avoided him more than she had ever done, and devoted herself almost entirely to her invalid cousin. She did not once, after that fearful evening, give him an opportunity of conversing with her alone, and he began to feel that his absence was desired.

The time which had been fixed for the Aubreys' leaving Geneva was approaching fast; but Janet could not be in a fit state to be moved for some weeks at least, and then her medical attendant declared that it must be by very easy journeys, and with as little fatigue as possible. It was therefore decided that Mr. Aubrey and his son should proceed to Milan, and then into the Tyrol, whither it had been intended that the whole family should have gone on leaving Switzerland, and that Mrs. Aubrey and her daughters should remain at Geneva until Janet's health was re-established.

A sad gloom had fallen upon the travellers, and much disappointment was felt by all at this necessary

alteration in their plans, and the separation of their happy party. Kate especially was deeply grieved. She had looked forward to continuing her journey through Switzerland, and then into Lombardy and the Tyrol, as a change and a distraction to her mind, when she knew that the departure of one of the party would leave a sense of loneliness in her heart, and take away the zest from all her occupations. She dreaded remaining at Geneva, where every object would remind her continually of happiness that she felt could never come again; and she also regretted the approaching absence of Reginald, who, next to Ethel, had from childhood been her favourite companion, and who, she knew, sympathized with her on certain subjects, which, however, were never alluded to by either of them.

Had Marco been altogether a free man, he would gladly have accompanied his uncle and Reginald on their tour, and they would have welcomed the addition of so intelligent and well-informed a companion to their diminished party. But Marco Griffi was still an Italian subject, and still under sentence of exile; and it would have been extremely imprudent in him to have shown himself within the Lombardian frontier, or in any part of the Italian States.

Mr. Aubrey had applied to the friends, whose influence had already been so kindly and so effectually exerted in saving his nephew's life, to obtain for him also the reversal of the decree of banishment; but

hitherto he had received no favourable reply. He had every hope of ultimate success; but the well-known tardiness of such transactions in Italy rendered it very uncertain when the young Venetian would be free to return to Florence. His plan of retiring to the Vaudois country was therefore the best that could be devised for the present, and seemed most likely to afford him some means of receiving tidings of his mother and of Isabel.

So he bade adieu to his relatives. He took leave of her who was the object of his heart's deep devotion, the very light of his eyes; and he gave no sign of all that that manly heart endured. And she—what did the excitable, quick-feeling Kate do? She shook hands with Marco, and wished him a prosperous journey, with a voice which, if low, was firm, and a smile that none but Ethel saw did not come from her heart. She would have added that she hoped he might soon be able to return to Florence, but the words seemed to choke her; she felt they would be hardly sincere, and they were unuttered.

It is wonderful how the heart can keep down, and as it were *postpone*, strong emotions of any kind, when circumstances imperatively require it to be calm. A forced stillness and an outward composure may be assumed, which common observers would deem to be genuine. The features may be unmoved; the eye may be tearless; even the voice may be unshaken: and yet

the heart is even then paying the penalty of its deception; and ample vengeance will be taken upon it afterwards by the very feelings over which it has obtained this brief victory.

So it was with Kate Aubrey. Marco left the villa, and her father and Reginald departed a few hours later, and none of them suspected how deeply her feelings were stirred, or how blank and objectless her life would seem when the morrow's sun arose. No, we should not say *objectless,* for to conquer those very feelings, to root them out of her heart, where unfortunately circumstances had of late caused them to take so deep a hold, was now to be the object of her life. She knew that she possessed great powers of enduring inward suffering; she would now try whether she could not also exert an equal power for conquering evil, which perhaps she could not bear uninjured.

In attending and conversing with her invalid cousin, she found her best resource from the spirit of indolence which would otherwise have crept over her, and from the worse than idle thoughts that came thronging through her brain whenever she was alone and unoccupied.

Janet recovered from the recent shock which her physical and nervous system had received, so far as to be able to resume her drives in the neighbourhood of Geneva, and even to walk for a considerable time along the level shores of the lake. She did not suffer, nor

were her spirits depressed ; and she spoke thankfully of the mercy that had been shown to her, in her partial restoration to health, and hopefully of the future, when she anticipated a perfect cure in the balmy climate of Italy.

But those who loved her well, and saw the changes that occurred in her from day to day, began to fear that her apparent recovery was only a deceitful and temporary rallying of the vital powers. At times she seemed almost as well as they had ever seen her ; and then, from no visible cause, she became so languid, that the utmost exertion she could endure, was to lie on a couch which was placed for her beneath a wide-spreading tree in the garden of the villa, and to listen while one of her companions read to her, or gently drew her into conversation.

It was generally Kate who took upon herself this office ; for Ethel was far the more active and energetic of the two sisters, and more disposed, both from strength and spirits, to be her mother's companion in the daily walks and drives which were necessary for her health. Ethel, likewise, had in no degree lost her taste for drawing. She had made very great progress in the art, and had taken a great number of very good sketches, which she was anxious to finish while yet the atmosphere and the colouring of Alpine scenery were around her.

She also knew or divined enough of Kate's present state of mind to perceive, that it was the greatest kind-

ness to let her follow her own inclination, and remain alone with Janet, who knew nothing of any secret cause of disquietude, and with whom she need make no painful efforts to appear cheerful.

Therefore, by common consent, Kate and Janet spent much of their time together; and those quiet hours were not unprofitably passed. Long, and deeply interesting, were the conversations between the young cousins; and when Janet felt that her strength had decreased, and that all the remedies that were adopted failed in giving tone to her system, or in removing the oft-recurring cough which had proved so obstinate the previous spring, she frequently spoke of death in a way that at first made Kate shudder. But soon she grew accustomed to the theme, and learnt to realize the probability that her cousin would never return to her native land again.

The characters of these two girls were very different. Janet was timid and diffident: diffident of herself, of her own powers, and her own gifts, natural and spiritual; and very fearful of presuming either on the free promises of God to His people, or on the affection of her fellow-creatures. But Kate knew none of these fears. Her faith was strong; her confidence was unlimited; not in *herself*, but in Him who had made her what she was, and had given her the grace to believe in Him; and also, in those whose love she knew she possessed, in spite of her many faults, and in whose constant

affection she reposed a trust that no outward circumstances could ever shake. And the continual intercourse of two such opposite dispositions was, in a measure, beneficial to each.

"I wish, Katie," said Janet one day, when their conversation had turned on the comfort to be derived from religion in times of sickness and sorrow; "I wish that I could feel the same 'joy and peace in believing' which you seem to possess. I do believe the promises of God; but I cannot feel sure that they apply to me. It appears as if it would be presumption in me to appropriate them."

"It cannot be presumption to take God at His word," replied her cousin, "and to take to myself the comfort of all those promises which are so freely made to every sinful child of Adam. I cannot help it, Janet. I hear and read those words of truth; and I believe them, and am glad."

"But it is your nature, Katie, to put confidence in every one. You are never fearful of yourself. You never doubt others, or fear that they or you can change or fail. I am so different. I have never been able to trust myself, or to feel sure of others. I can own to you now that I never dared to believe that Edmund really loved me, until it was too late to tell him how warmly, how unalterably, his love was returned. I never even knew how dear I was to my beloved father, until he told me so on his death-bed. I cannot think

that I am worthy to be so loved, even by my fellow-creatures. Can you wonder, then, that it seems to me presumption to believe that I am loved and accepted by God, and that I shall dwell in His presence for ever?"

"Dear Janet, you are weak in body, and your spirit is weakened too. I hoped that all these doubts and fears, which you felt so strongly when we were with you at Altringham, had been set at rest for ever. Remember all that Reginald used to say to you; and how he then convinced you that our truest humility consists in believing unreservedly all that God has declared to us, and our only acceptable service is that which springs from gratitude for His undeserved mercies. On you these mercies are bestowed, as freely as on all who will receive them. Then why not rejoice?"

"I do, Kate; I do at times. Oh, how often, in my sad and lonely life at Altringham, have I thought over the happy hours that we spent together in my room! It made me happy then to listen to Reginald, and it makes me happy now to hear you repeat the same blessed truths which are my only hope and confidence, and on which I would always rely. But I cannot always realize these things as you do, Kate. I cannot sometimes feel sure that I am not deceiving myself; and that the calmness with which I look forward to death does not rather arise from habitual indif-

ference to life, than from a meetness for the joys of heaven."

"This world was early blighted to you, Janet; and yours is not a disposition to feel such bereavements lightly, or to recover from them quickly. I used to fancy that no sorrow could ever so entirely weigh me down as to crush my spirits, and destroy my buoyant feeling of health and activity. But I feel differently now. I begin to doubt whether anything on earth could ever satisfy the yearnings of my heart; and I oftener lift my thoughts to heaven, where every taste and every capacity will be gratified, and filled as they never can be here. There is always *emptiness* here; in another world there will be '*fulness* of joy for evermore.'"

"Yes, Katie, 'fulness of joy,' assuredly. But it has sometimes occurred to me that the joy which would satisfy my soul, would not suffice for you. Rest and peace, and the presence of those I love, seem enough for my highest hopes as regards those pleasures which are not purely spiritual. Your soaring spirit would ask more."

"Oh, Janet! I know that my spirit does sometimes almost spurn the things of this world, the things of time and sense, and dare to mount, on the wings of fancy, far above them all! It is knowledge I desire. The knowledge of God Himself, and of all that He has done from all eternity, and throughout the infinite

universe. Only a few faint glimpses of His works are permitted to mortal men, and I cannot attain even to those. But in a future state I believe that I shall possess the knowledge I now so vainly yearn after. 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter,' cannot apply merely to the dealings of our Lord with His people during their earthly lives. Surely it is a promise of knowledge of every kind; a knowledge that will impart ineffable joy and satisfaction, and will be ever increasing throughout eternity. Do you feel all this, Janet?"

"Not as you do, Kate. I do not know any one, not even dear Ethel and Reginald, who seem to have the same aspirations that you have, or the same thirst for knowledge, even here. I fancy that Marco is more like you than any other member of your family. He always seems to understand you; and often to feel as you do."

Janet saw the blush that suffused Kate's face, and she heard a certain tremulousness in her voice as she rose hastily to make some alteration in the cushions that supported her cousin, and replied,—

"Yes, Marco often agreed with me. I fancied once that I had found in him a kindred spirit; but we did not afterwards understand each other so well. He is certainly clever; and very agreeable at times."

"Very agreeable always, I think, Katie," replied Janet, who was rather surprised at the tone in which

her companion had spoken, but did not yet guess that the cause lay deeper than some little feeling of annoyance or disappointment. So she proceeded,—

"I have a great longing to see our future cousin, Isabel Anzilotti. I hope I may live to go to Florence; but I do not think I shall ever see England again. You must bury me in some sweet spot, dear Kate; and when you return to Italy some day with Marco and Isabel, or perhaps on your own wedding tour, you will visit my grave. The thought is not a sad one to me."

"But it is very, very sad to me, Janet, darling;" said Kate, who was now completely overpowered by various struggling emotions, and could no longer speak with composure. She knelt down by Janet, and leaned her head upon her shoulder, and wept, as no one had seen her weep before, whatever she might have done in secret.

"Dear Katie, have you not learnt to feel as I do, and have long done, that my life is a very precarious one, and to be resigned to the prospect of an early death for me? Since I have lost all I loved best on earth, a long life has seemed no blessing to me; and since I have been permitted to entertain a good hope of a glorious immortality—feeble and trembling as that hope is at times,—my natural dread of death is greatly lessened. I have been very happy here, Katie, and it is a grief to me to think of leaving you all; but I know that we shall meet again, and I am content."

"For your sake, dearest, I do not wish you a long life," replied Kate, who had now mastered her emotion, and was able to speak with more composure. "But I have learnt to love you so dearly, that I cannot bear to think of losing you so soon. We were all so happy together; and now a gloom seems to have come over everything. The very mountains look less grand and beautiful, and the lake has lost its brightness."

Janet took her cousin's hand, and looked into her clear ingenuous eyes, and said gently,—

"Is there no other cause for this gloom, my own Katie? Do not be angry with me; do not turn away your face from me. I see it now, and I ought to have guessed it sooner, for you are greatly changed in many ways since we were together at Altringham. You did not know that Marco was engaged when you knew him as Signor Griffi; and if his manner was then what it has been here, I am not surprised that you never suspected his affections were given to another. If I had not known that such was the case, I should have believed that he loved you, Kate; and I should have perceived also that he was not indifferent to you."

"Oh no, Janet,—do not say that! Surely he cannot think so. Marco cannot suppose that I have given my heart to him unsought! Once I thought as you do of his manner: I confess I was deceived. But do not blame him, for I am sure it was unintentional. Our tastes and opinions agreed in many ways, and we found

so much to converse about at Florence, and he was always so attentive and thoughtful. He was so to all; and it was foolish in me to fancy he showed me any marked preference. I will try to forget that fancy, Janet, and to think of him only as the son of our uncle Marcus. You know I always did admire our uncle, even *on canvas.* You cannot, therefore, wonder that I should be a little captivated when I met his living likeness, and animated by such a mind as Marco's."

Kate smiled as she said this, and tried to speak cheerfully; but Janet saw that the wound was deeper than her cousin wished even her to perceive, and she felt for her very sincerely. Still she hoped that her high spirit, and her good sense and principle, would enable her to overcome an attachment that could only embitter her future life, and render her intercourse with some of the members of her own family uncomfortable and constrained.

"We will talk no more of this, Kate," she said; "and we will hope and pray that it may all pass away. I shall see you happy and light-hearted again when we are all together at Florence. And when I am gone, and when Isabel is your cousin, you must love her as you love me now; and I believe, Katie, that my spirit will often be near you, and will rejoice in the consciousness of your happiness."

"Oh, I fully believe that such may be the case!"

exclaimed Kate, eagerly. "I could not bear to think that even death could put an end to all intercourse between us. Yes, Janet,—

'It is a beautiful belief,
That ever round our head,
Are hovering in angel form
The spirits of the dead!'

I often fancy, when the evening clouds are glowing with rich warm colours, as they are now over that dark Alpine range, and the sky beyond is clear and blue and transparent, that I can almost see the spirits of the blest passing to and fro, or standing on the crimson clouds to gaze on the scenes and the individuals they loved on earth. I love to think that Edmund's spirit is thus present with us; and if it is God's will that you are taken away from us, how often shall I look upwards and fancy I see you also, my Janet!"

"Your fancies are sometimes strange, dear Katie; but they are very pleasant and very encouraging; and I love to hear you tell them. Death loses almost all its terrors when I think of it as you do. Apart from leaving those one loves, there seems nothing for the Christian to fear, and, oh! how much to desire!—to 'depart and be with Christ;' to leave this feeble suffering body, and all the little cares and disappointments of life; to soar through boundless space, and feel neither fatigue or weariness; and to meet again the loved and lost. Yes, Katie, I am well content to feel that I get

weaker day by day, in spite of all the love and care and attention that you all lavish upon me."

The return of Mrs. Aubrey and Ethel from their evening walk interrupted the discourse of the cousins, which, though solemn in its subject, had left them far from sad or depressed. Kate was relieved by the involuntary confidence into which she had been drawn; and Janet was cheered and elevated by her cousin's mode of viewing subjects that are often looked on as only to be alluded to with a gloomy countenance, or altogether shunned.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was the anniversary of the day on which the Charles Aubreys had been summoned to Altringham to attend the deathbed of their elder brother. Janet remembered the day, and spoke of it to her aunt and cousins; and her remark led to many recollections of the time that was past. Her father's death had been a very heavy blow to Janet. It had deprived her of the being on whom she rested for support and encouragement; and who, since Edmund had been taken away from her, was her chief object in life, and her strongest tie to earth.

It always saddened her to talk of her father, and yet she loved to do so; and now she dwelt on her future re-union with him, and spoke of it as not far distant. She knew that her mother's second marriage was to take place very shortly, even before the first year of her widowhood had expired. Such was Sir Hugh Duncombe's will, in order that he might take his bride with him to Scotland, when he went there for grouse-shooting. He had engaged a moor for the season, and it would by no means have suited him to pay for it,

and not to receive the full value in return. Neither did he choose to defer his marriage until after his return from the north. There were certain matters of calculation that made him anxious to become the legal master of Mrs. Aubrey and her jointure and other property before quarter-day; and this anxiety he expressed in a way so flattering to his *fiancée*, that she could not refuse to give him the pleasure of her company in his Highland retreat.

This arrangement had been hinted at before Janet left Altringham; and her strong remonstrance had displeased her mother, and made her the more gladly accede to the proposal for her to join her relatives on the Continent. But the sorrowing daughter had hoped that a sense of the common respect due to the memory of her deceased father would, as the time drew near, prevent her mother—unfeeling as she was—from acting in so shameless a manner; and every letter she received from Altringham, and which did not make any mention of the dreaded day being fixed, was a reprieve to her.

On the day to which we have alluded, the English mail brought her a letter from her mother. It was an unfortunate coincidence, such as very often occurs in life, that this letter arrived just when poor Janet seemed little able to bear any further trial to her feelings, and when she was suffering from heat and languor. But so it was; and as she eagerly opened it, and her eyes

passed rapidly down the paper, her friends saw the deep red spot, which so clearly marked an increase of suffering, either bodily or mental, settle in her cheek, while tears filled her downcast eyes.

She did not speak; but, putting the letter into her aunt's hand, she rose, and hurried from the room with faltering steps. The letter was brief, and not totally devoid of kindness. Mrs. Aubrey had even taken some pains to excuse her hasty marriage to her daughter, and to make it appear less indecorous in the eyes of her deceased husband's relatives. But the fact was enough. The day—an early day—was fixed, and the weeds of widowhood were to be discarded for bridal attire.

Janet's spirits did not recover from the shock they had received, before the news of her mother's marriage having actually taken place reached her. But this intelligence did not so greatly agitate her as the knowledge of the day being fixed had done. It seemed as if her mother had thenceforth ceased to be connected with her by the same tie as formerly; as if she looked on her as *Lady Duncombe*, and no longer as her beloved father's widow. The information also did not come from the bride herself, but from old Rebecca Fowler, who wrote a long account of the wedding, with all its particulars, and with all her own feelings thereupon, to her daughter Ruth.

This letter Ruth could not refrain from showing to

her young mistress; and in the absence of any more elegant description of the interesting affair, we must quote some passages in the words of the good old gatekeeper.

"It was finished off on Thursday last, and this is only Monday, and I am all in such a flutter still that I can hardly write. But the dear young lady must hear how it all went off, and I know my Lady did not write, for she sent to tell me to do so, and to give her love to Miss Janet. Well, my child, I dare say you expect me to tell you all about grand dresses, and gay garlands, and fine feasts; but I saw none of them. Some of the new-comers on the estate wanted to put up an arch over *my* gate, for the bride and bridegroom to drive under. But I minded the time when the good old squire brought home his bride, that is now Lady Duncombe, and when we had arches over every gate, and flowers in every hand to strew before them, and prayers in every heart that she might be a good wife to Mr. Edwin, and a good mistress to all his people. And she was a lovely lady then to look at, and her smiles seemed to promise much. But she disappointed us; and no more wreaths or arches would I put up for one who could so soon forget that she belonged to the honourable house, and could give her hand to that upstart Sir Hugh. I did look through the side window and see them go by, with their four horses, and her flaunting maid and the gold-laced footman up behind. But I

would not go to the gate; and God forgive me if I did not ask for a blessing on them. I could not do it then. Well, may all that are left of the honourable house be blessed! We can spare the one that has left it. I hope my dear young mistress, and yours, Ruth, is enjoying better health. Tell her not to fret about her mother. She is with those who will be better to her than ever her mother was, though it is bold of me to say so much. My duty to all the family, which also comes from the Goodwins, and they hope Herbert is doing well. It will be a glad day when they all come home, and the new young squire that has turned up in those foreign parts, which I shall not like so well as Mr. Charles, though Mr. Marcus was a fine young gentleman till he ran away, and almost broke his mother's heart—dear good lady as she was! Now, Ruth, my dear child, mind all I said to you before you left good old England; and don't you be getting any new-fangled ways, nor yet dresses; and keep to your Bible, Ruth, and never follow the heathenish ways that I fear me you see all around you. And so the blessing of God will be with you, and I shall live to see you and my dear Miss Janet come home, which is my prayer day and night, and for all the honourable house; and I shall always remain your loving mother, Rebecca Fowler."

From the day that Janet read that letter, she never named her mother again; but she did not forget her in her prayers; and who can say, in years to come—

years, perhaps of disappointment, and of sorrowful regret for those who were never duly prized in their lifetime—who can say what blessings may yet descend on that hard-hearted mother, in answer to her gentle daughter's prayers.

That daughter, that only child, was passing away. Her short life on earth was drawing to a close, and her mother was occupied with her new position, and her new avocations and amusements, and heeded not the letters that told her that Janet's life was despaired of.

Very anxious was Mrs. Aubrey for the return of her husband and Reginald, when she saw that each day the dear invalid grew weaker, and her slight frame wasted more and more. And Mr. Aubrey and his son would have hurried back to Geneva without delay, if they had received the announcement of her declining state as soon as it was intended they should do. But owing to their leaving one of the towns in the Tyrol a day sooner than they had proposed to do, the letter did not reach them, and followed them for several days, until they received it at Milan. There more than one letter awaited them, and the purport of them was such as to convince them there was no time to be lost. They therefore set out immediately, and travelled day and night until they reached Geneva.

Gladly were they welcomed at the villa, and by none more so than by Janet. A decided change had taken place in her after she heard of her mother's

marriage; though, as we have said, she never spoke of it, and betrayed no great excitement on the subject. Her spirits even rose, and she was almost always cheerful: perhaps she regretted less than ever to leave a world which the conduct of the nearest relative she possessed had embittered to her. She took great pleasure in talking to Ruth, and trying to console her for her own approaching departure; and speaking to her of the things which concerned her eternal welfare, and of which she now felt more and more deeply the paramount importance.

So attached was Ruth to her young mistress, that for a long while she refused to be comforted, and was ready to exclaim, with her namesake of old, "Where thou diest, I will die; and there will I be buried." But at length she learned to regard her dear young lady's death in a brighter light; and to look forward for her, and with her, to a better world than this. Her own feelings, also, of anticipated bereavement, were greatly lightened by the promise, which was willingly made, that she should remain in the family, and occupy the same position with Ethel and Kate, which she had so well filled with respect to their cousin.

Nothing indeed could exceed the devotion which she showed towards her young mistress. No exertion was too great for her; no attention too continued. She could hardly bear to allow any one, even Mrs. Aubrey

and her daughters, to share the task of nursing the invalid with her; but to Kate she yielded it with a better grace than to any other, for she saw in Janet's languid but expressive eye the pleasure she felt at receiving any kind offices from her gentle hand. Often she was permitted to remain in the room, or to sit near the couch on which Janet reclined in the garden, and to listen to the conversation of the cousins; and she always felt this to be a privilege, more especially when Reginald formed one of the party, and read or talked with the dying girl, or prayed with her in simple fervent words that came from the depth of his own heart, and went to the hearts of all his hearers.

Very sweet and touching was the gentle resignation of Janet, under all the weakness and suffering of her bodily state; and very encouraging was it also to see how, as "the outward man decayed, the inward man was renewed day by day." So great at length was her debility, that she could no longer walk even to her favourite spot beneath the shady tree, but was carried there daily in the afternoon, and remained until the setting sun warned her watchful attendants to remove her again to the house.

One evening she lay, as usual, gazing at the view, which seemed ever to grow more lovely in her eyes, and Reginald and Kate were with her. She had appeared sinking all that day, and had spoken very little, and only smiled gently when she met the

affectionate and anxious eyes of her friends and attendants. She now lay silent and motionless for a long time, and Kate thought she slept. But suddenly she opened her eyes, and looked eagerly around her. Then, fixing an earnest gaze on Reginald, she said :—

"Thank God for His mercy to me! I am going to Heaven; and it is you, Reginald, who have shown me the way! You have taught me to feel a blessed hope and confidence; and from my departing soul, and rejoicing spirit, I thank you. Once I hoped to have been your sister here on earth; but you have been more than a brother to me."

She paused, and again closed her eyes, as if in a quiet sleep. How young and fair, and almost child-like she looked! Her hands were folded together across her breast; and her golden hair hung down on her shoulders and round her pale sweet face; and her long dark eyelashes were wet with tears, not of sorrow, but of joy. Presently she again looked up, and said; while a blush like a winter rose just tinged her cheek,—

"Yes, I am going to heaven. I have no more fears now, Kate. I shall again meet my father, and I shall see Edmund too. He will be there to welcome me, and I shall not then fear to let him know, that it was the hope of becoming worthy of him that first turned my mind from the childish vanities in which I once delighted, and fixed my thoughts on higher and nobler

objects; and that the hope of meeting him again has often drawn my thoughts to that happy world above, where I know he dwells. May God forgive me for suffering such selfish motives to influence me. But I feel as if He had blessed them."

"Surely He has blessed them and sanctified them, dear Janet, to your eternal good, and to His own glory," replied Reginald. "It is thus He often mercifully deals with us, and vouchsafes to over-rule even our weaknesses and imperfect motives, for the accomplishment of His own good purposes. Do not let such thoughts now disquiet you."

"Oh, Reginald, nothing disquiets me now. All is bright and clear—and I am happy. Sing to me now, Katie darling," continued the dying girl. "Sing to me one of your sweet hymns, and call them all to join you."

Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey and Ethel were approaching the spot as she spoke; and Ruth drew near also. She had not been far off, and had listened with tears to the conversation of her beloved mistress. They all now stood round her, and their voices were raised together in a hymn that Janet loved. When they ceased, she said in a less firm voice,—

"Thank you all. While you sang, I seemed to hear the voices of angels singing with you from the sky: and Edmund's voice was there. He called me. Hush! he calls again. Katie, is this death?"

Her voice trembled; but her hands were stretched out towards her much-loved relatives, and a smile was on her lips, as she gazed fixedly from one countenance to another, and marked the tears that could not be restrained.

"Do not weep for me," she faintly whispered. "Rejoice evermore! Yes, rejoice evermore!"

Those were her last words; and as the sun sank behind the lofty mountains, her spirit took its flight to that land where "there is no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

How strange it is to look at the dying Christian, and think of the coming change! To look at the dead, and know that change has come! One moment all is weakness, humiliation, suffering, decay. The next moment the redeemed soul is endued with strength, and glory, and beauty, and eternal felicity.

So felt the Aubreys, as they looked on all that now remained of their much-loved Janet.

CHAPTER XXV.

A FEW days after the wasted form of Janet had been laid in its quiet resting-place, Mr. Aubrey received intelligence that the sentence of banishment against Marco had been reversed. It was intimated that this act of grace was performed in consideration of his being of English descent, and soon to become a British subject. At the same time, Mr. Aubrey was advised to warn his nephew, that his making any long stay in Tuscany would not be agreeable to the authorities; and also, that his conduct while there would be carefully watched.

This gave his uncle no surprise; for he had fully expected that Marco would be an object for the surveillance of the police, if his return to Florence was in any way tolerated. But as he was now growing anxious to return to England, and to resign Altringham, and all that pertained to it, into the hands of the rightful possessor, he felt that a short stay at Florence, while he was also there, could not involve his nephew in any difficulty, and must be earnestly desired by Marco. A change was also advisable for his daughters, after the

sad scenes they had so lately witnessed. The loss of their cousin had depressed them greatly, especially Katie, who, since Janet's death, appeared listless and unoccupied. The mountain air of Switzerland had ceased to invigorate her; and all the languor and depression which had caused her parents so much uneasiness during the latter part of their stay at Florence, had returned.

Mr. Aubrey talked sanguinely of the salutary effects of a speedy return to her native climate, and her home at Wareham, where she had always been the life of their domestic circle, and remarkable for her cheerfulness and activity. But his wife shook her maternal head, and continued to entertain great doubts whether any influence but time, and her own good sense and high principle, would avail to render Kate what she had been previous to their journey to Italy.

That tour had been looked forward to with the liveliest anticipations of pleasure, and with a hope of much beneficial result, both mental and bodily, to all the young people; but the result did not appear to have altogether fulfilled these hopes. It is true that both Ethel and Kate had made much progress in several branches of accomplishment; and had seen many new scenes, and new objects, which would afford them pleasant subjects for reflection and conversation in their peaceful English home: and Reginald looked stronger and more robust for his cessation from parochial labour.

But if Katie's voice had lost its cheerful tone, and her step its active elasticity; if her merry laugh was seldom heard, and a cloud sat on her open brow; if, also, on Reginald's handsome countenance, that generally beamed with happiness, and seemed to shed a bright and cheering influence on all around him, an expression of anxious care and inward struggle was frequently to be traced, their parents felt that the objects of their journey had not been obtained, and they could but hope and pray that present disappointment might result in ultimate good to their children.

Had it not been for the feeling which they justly feared was embittering Kate's young life, and would render her future intercourse with Marco uncomfortable, if not embarrassed, there would have been no drawback to their pleasure in having discovered the son of their brother Marcus, the real heir of Altringham. As we have seen, they were well contented with their happy and beautiful home at Wareham, and had no desire to leave it, even for the more stately Hall. For years they had desired and hoped to hear some tidings of the wanderer; and now that they knew he could return to them no more, they were pleased to have discovered his son, and to have found him, in every respect, so much to be esteemed and admired. Of Isabel Anzilotti, they also entertained a very high opinion, and they loved her for her dutiful attention to Signora Griffi, and her devotion to her young and help-

less sister. Her beauty and her grace seemed to fit her to be Marco's bride, and to take her place at the head of a large establishment; and, on every account, it seemed most desirable that the marriage should take place as soon as possible after all the family were assembled at Florence.

This projected arrangement was spoken of in Kate's presence; and she listened to the details with perfect outward composure, and even forced herself to take part in the conversation, and to express a hope that the wedding might be celebrated in the quietest manner possible, out of respect to the memory of poor Janet, who was Marco's near relative as well as their own.

But little had been heard of Marco since he went into the Vaudois country. He had written briefly once or twice to Mrs. Aubrey, during her husband's absence from Geneva, and had told of his safe arrival in the Valleys, and the kind and hospitable reception he had met with from those who knew Isabel Anzilotti, and indeed from all the natives of that interesting country with whom he had become acquainted. When he last wrote, he had still been unable to obtain any intelligence of his mother, nor did he feel any assurance that his letters to her had ever reached their destination. But the time was drawing near when Pastor Reynal hoped to accomplish his generally annual visit to Florence; and Marco proposed to remain in the valley of San Martino until his return.

A considerable time had elapsed between the dates of Marco's letters and their arrival at Geneva; and it was now more than a fortnight since the last had been received. The Aubreys, therefore, felt very uncertain as to his present place of abode, and the best method of communicating to him, without loss of time, the welcome intelligence that Italy was again open to him, and that they hoped to meet him at Florence when they arrived there.

After several plans had been proposed and rejected, on account of their uncertainty, Reginald observed,—

"Why should not I go to the Valleys, and search out Marco? If he has left San Martino, and gone to one of the other districts, I cannot have much difficulty in finding him in the small territory that now belongs to the Waldensian Church. I have always wished to visit their wild, picturesque retreat, and Marco will introduce me to some of those heroic 'men of the valleys.'"

"That is an admirable scheme, Reginald," replied his father; "and were it not that my presence will be necessary to your mother and sisters, during their journey to Florence, I should propose to accompany you. I cannot, however, do that; but I am glad that you should go, and make acquaintance with some members of that venerable Church, and also with their wild and secluded homes. You had better set out to-morrow, and take Herbert with you. It will probably occupy you much longer to seek out Marco, and see

something of the valleys, and then travel with him through Piedmont to Florence, than we shall be in performing our less exciting journey; and as we cannot leave Geneva for several days, you will gain that time, and still arrive at the beautiful city nearly as soon as we shall."

"I shall tell Marco of all the plans which you have arranged for him," said Reginald, calmly. He was learning to think and speak of his cousin's marriage as he felt it his duty, as a man and as a Christian, to compel himself to do. "I shall inform him that he must prepare to be a bridegroom at very short notice; and that we intend to carry him and his bride away to England, with his mother and his blind sister, before the country that now claims him as her own has quite put on her autumnal garb."

"How strange it will seem to both Marco and Isabel," said Ethel, "to feel that England is to be their home! I fear the change may be very unpalatable at first; but Marco is so sensible, and Isabel is so full of resources, and so ready to be pleased with everything, —everything, of course, that Marco likes,—that I think they will soon be quite reconciled to beautiful Altringham. How will poor little Juana feel, I wonder? She will be as sensible of the change as any one; perhaps even more so, in spite of her blindness. Mamma, I hope you will let me have Juana as my charge, at least for some time. Isabel will have other things to attend

to in her new home; and it will be a pleasure to me to have the care of her, and to teach her: she is very quick, and very docile, and I believe she loves me."

"I shall willingly consent to that arrangement," replied Mrs. Aubrey. "Juana is the sweetest child I ever saw; and her cheerfulness under her great affliction is quite beautiful, and renders her doubly interesting. She will be an amusement to us all, and will give you and Katie pleasant occupation when we return to our quiet life at Wareham. You will not feel it dull, I hope, my children, after all the enjoyment of this summer."

"I shall be glad, very glad, Mother, to get back to dear old Wareham," said Kate, with rather a weary look. "I have enjoyed more intense happiness in Italy and in Switzerland, than I ever experienced in my life before; and I would not lose the impressions I have received, and the pictures I have collected for my mind's eye to gaze upon, for anything that could be offered to me. But it is time to go home now. I think that I shall grow stronger there, when I can ride and walk about again with Reginald and Ethel, and feel that I may be of some use in the world. These last months will then seem only like a pleasant dream: not *all* pleasant though," she added with a sigh, as she rose and went to the window, which looked out over the lake, and from whence she could see many of the

spots where she had spent very happy hours—hours that might never come again.

The following day Reginald set out with Herbert for the valley of San Martino, where the home of Pastor Reynal was situated; and the rest of the party commenced their preparations for leaving Geneva, which had been the scene of so much joy and so much sorrow. We will leave them thus occupied, and follow Reginald to the Cottian Alps, among whose deepest and most secluded glens lies the retreat of the Waldenses.

It was not without fatigue and difficulty that he penetrated into these mountain fastnesses. Both he and Herbert were mounted on strong ponies, accustomed to climb the steepest acclivities, and to pass safely along the narrowest paths that wound round the precipitous sides of the craggy mountains. The danger and the exertion were both welcome to Reginald, for they occupied his mind, and helped to banish painful thoughts; while the pure fresh air and continued exercise braced his nerves, and made him feel strong to endure the trials that he knew he should soon have to encounter.

The range of Alps was crossed, and the travellers descended on the Italian side of the gigantic wall that forms a boundary between France and Italy. The territory belonging to the Waldenses was formerly of wider extent, and included the valleys of the Clusone and the Pragela; but it is now limited to the narrow

valleys of Lucerna, Perosa, and San Martino, to the latter of which Reginald directed his steps.

His admiration for the sublime and beautiful, which was almost as enthusiastic as that of Kate, was gratified to the utmost during his journey over the Cottian range. The scenery seemed to combine the beauties both of Italy and Switzerland. The craggy rocks, the foaming waterfalls, the clear streams, and the bright green herbage, with a range of snowy mountains bounding the horizon, all recalled the recent excursions among the Swiss Alps; while the dark foliage of the mulberry trees, which are cultivated by the Vaudois peasants for the support of the silkworm, and form their chief wealth; the clambering vine, now loaded with fruit, and the rich crops of golden maize, told of the climate of Italy. And so did also the clear deep blue of the sky, and the brilliant hues that glowed in the horizon at sunrise and sunset, and the bright flowers that decked the verdant banks, and hung in garlands from the cliffs above his head.

It was late in the evening when Reginald reached the simple residence of Pastor Reynal, to which he was guided by one of the good man's flock, who seemed to take pleasure in speaking his praises, and telling of his acts of benevolence, and his labours for the spiritual good of his people. The weary traveller was very joyfully welcomed by Marco Griffi, and not less cordially by the pastor and his wife and family, who all vied

with each other in their hospitable attentions to their unexpected guest. He was made to feel at once that he was no stranger; for Marco had spoken much of his English relatives, and especially of his cousin Reginald, whose sincere piety and Christian devotedness of character had won his highest esteem, and whose amiable and ingenuous disposition had inspired him with a brother's love.

It was with sincere thankfulness that Reginald observed, as he had an opportunity of doing that evening and on many subsequent occasions, that all the earnest impressions which had been made on Marco's mind by Pastor Bert, during his imprisonment at Turin, and had been greatly strengthened at Geneva, were now much more decided. Pastor Reynal had found him a willing listener and an intelligent inquirer; and he had availed himself of the opportunity which Marco's residence in his quiet home afforded him, to work on his feelings and to convince his judgment. He had, in short, brought him to acknowledge and receive the Holy Scriptures as the ground of his belief and the rule of his life.

It was beautiful to see the pastor's reverence for that Bible which was once a treasure to be fought for by his brave and persecuted countrymen, and retained at the cost of their best blood; but which now, through the mercy of God, is to be found throughout all the dwellings of the Vaudois. After supper he read a por-

tion of the blessed book to his assembled family, and offered up a prayer; and, as he restored the ancient volume to its accustomed place, he turned to Reginald, and said,—

"God be praised that we possess this Bible, which your English Christian philosopher, Locke, has so well described in his magnificent language,—which I once read, and have never forgotten,—as 'that blessed Book which hath God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth, without mixture of error, for its matter.'"

The pastor made his quotation in English; and his sweet smile, and his foreign accent, added beauty to the noble and expressive passage.

CHAPTER XXVI.

When Marco knew that his return to Italy was no longer prohibited, he expressed much pleasure at the prospect of soon seeing his beloved mother ; but Reginald wondered that he did not show more of a lover's eagerness to hasten back to the Villa Anzilotti, to console not only his mother, but also the lovely Isabel, for all that they had suffered on his account, It seemed that as soon as he was informed that the way was open to him, and that the Aubreys would meet him at Florence, his impatience subsided, and he was willing to linger in the valleys, on the pretext of showing Reginald more of their natural beauties, and making him better acquainted with their inhabitants.

How long the secret reluctance to return to Florence, which dwelt in the breasts of both the young men, might have kept them among the Waldenses, had not some light broken in upon their minds, and cleared away the errors in which they were shrouded, we cannot say. Happily that pleasant light did break in, and it occurred as follows.

The cousins were wandering among the mountain

glens, on their way to meet the pastor, who had started at daybreak to a distant village, and was expected to return about sunset.

Their conversation turned upon their night journey over Mont Cenis, when each had became so much interested in the other; but when only Reginald had suspected the relationship in which they stood together. Suddenly Reginald observed,—

"I remember on that occasion, Marco, your speaking of your disappointed hopes, your poverty, and your blighted life, and of one whom you felt it your duty not even to desire to see again. I have often thought of what you said; and even that night I felt that I understood to what you alluded. I have never asked for your confidence till now; but, as the time draws on, I cannot any longer refrain from offering you my warm congratulations. There can be no obstacle to your happiness now."

Marco absolutely started, as his cousin uttered these last words. His large dark eyes expressed the most unfeigned astonishment, and his usually pale features glowed with emotion. He did not speak; and Reginald feared he was offended at his alluding to a subject on which he had never himself spoken.

"Forgive me, Marco, if I have annoyed you. Knowing the object of your affections so well as I do, and appreciating her so highly, I cannot but tell you that I consider you a happy man."

"Reginald, for God's sake explain yourself," cried Marco, in accents that showed how deeply he was moved.

"Surely you cannot misunderstand me, Marco. What is there now to prevent your laying your new-found fortune at Isabel's feet, and taking her with you to England, to grace your happy home?"

"Isabel! Isabel Anzilotti!" almost groaned the disappointed young man. "She is my sister, Reginald; I have known her from a child, and I have loved her: but only as a brother, only as a friend. No; it is not of her that I have cherished dreams too happy to be realized."

It was now Reginald's turn to be agitated. A bright hope seemed to shine upon him from a distance; but he still feared that it might prove delusive.

"Marco," he said, and he looked very earnestly into his cousin's face. "Tell me candidly, are you sure that Isabel has never mistaken the nature of your feelings for her? I saw the intense interest she felt at the time of your imprisonment. I watched her colour fade away day by day, and her bright eyes grow dim, during those days of anxiety and suspense. I even once surprised her in tears, as she sat with Juana in their garden. The blind child spoke of you, and the blush that rose to Isabel's lovely face showed, but too plainly, whom it was she thought of. Is it not so, Marco?"

"God forbid!" replied his cousin, earnestly. "I know that my mother would gladly have regarded her as her future daughter, for she loves her dearly. But Isabel has never entertained such a thought. I am convinced of it, Reginald; and grieved indeed should I be if I could believe that she might ever feel the disappointment and the grief that unrequited love must cause. Be assured you have misunderstood my sister Isabel. Her feelings are very strong, and she is much more demonstrative than your English women. I know she has the strongest regard for me, and I know she has given me her prayers, both for my present and my eternal welfare; but she has no feeling towards me which she might not cherish if she were the wife of another."

Reginald grasped his hand, and exclaimed, "God bless you for this assurance. Then may I still have hope!"

"Is it possible, my dear Reginald," replied Marco, very kindly; "that you have loved my friend Isabel, and have forborne to urge your own suit, believing that I had a prior claim to her affections? You are a generous fellow. I believe you would never have let me know that my happiness would have been sorrow to you. You shall have,—what I do not think you will need,—my warmest aid and sympathy. But tell me, Reginald, have others believed that I was attached to Isabel? Has my cousin Kate believed it?"

"She has. We all supposed that the Signorina's affection for you was more than sisterly; and we could not for a moment believe that it was not mutual. Indeed, my aunt Isidora implied as much in her conversations with my mother. So convinced were we of this being the case, that we actually made arrangements for you and Isabel without consulting you. We intended to marry you very soon after we all assembled at Florence, and to send you off on a wedding tour to Germany or France, while we escorted your mother and your blind sister to England, and prepared Altringham for the reception of yourself and your bride."

"I am really extremely indebted to you all for your kind forethought," answered Marco, laughing. But a look of anxiety again took the place of mirth, and he continued, "Did Kate take part in all these arrangements? And can this utterly unfounded belief have had anything to do with her change of manner towards me since we parted at Florence? Forgive me, Reginald, for saying it; but there was a time, a very happy time, when Kate seemed to take some interest in me, and to care to know my thoughts and feelings. But in Switzerland she was so different. Frequently she avoided me, and took advantage of any pretext to leave me, and join some other of our party. Once or twice she seemed to forget her reserve, and conversed with me as she used to do when I was only her drawing-master. But that never lasted long; and there was

a look of uneasiness at times that made me fear I had offended her. Tell me, Reginald, if you can, was that the case? Did any attention from me displease your sister?"

"Ask her that question yourself, Marco," replied his cousin. And the bright intelligent smile that lit up his fine manly countenance was very encouraging to Marco's hopes, and made him as eager to commence the journey to Florence, as he had hitherto appeared indifferent upon the subject. Instead of remaining in the valleys until Pastor Reynal could make his projected visit to the Villa Anzilotti, and return again to San Martino, he now proposed to Reginald that they should set out without any loss of time, not even waiting until the pastor could accompany them and guide them on their way.

As they pursued their walk, the cousins continued to converse on the subjects which so deeply interested them, and the spirits of both the young men rose considerably. Reginald was at length satisfied that all the interest which Isabel had shown in Marco's fate arose simply from pure sisterly regard, and from sympathy in the anxiety of Signora Griffi; and he began to remember, with more satisfaction than he cared to express, how she used to brighten up when he appeared at the Villa, and how willing she had been to entertain him with her music, and to sing with him the songs which he knew were Marco's favourites. Why was

this? he asked himself; and the inward reply was not unflattering.

"I feel now," said Marco to his cousin, who was walking by his side in silent meditation; "how much better you are suited to my friend Isabel than I could ever have been. She was always very serious in all her feelings, and very decided in her religious principles and opinions. Even if I had sought her hand, she would have rejected me on the ground of our dissimilarity on those points, which she has ever deemed the most important. I thank God that I have now been brought to think and feel more as she always hoped I should do eventually. But when she last saw me, I was half an infidel. If your family had been aware how far removed I was from them in faith, I fear they would never have admitted me to their friendship as they so kindly did: and changed as I feel I am, perhaps Kate would still fear to trust her happiness in the hands of a man who was brought up as I was, with no settled religious belief."

"I do not think she need fear you now, Marco," said Reginald. "I trust now we all feel alike, at least on essential points."

"I am no infidel now, Reginald. I can say from my heart, 'Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief.' But I am aware of my own ignorance; and I desire to be more enlightened. Will you be my spiritual guide and instructor, Reginald? Will you endeavour to

make me such as Kate will not despise and shun?"

"God helping me, I will," said Reginald, as he warmly grasped his cousin's hand. "We must be brothers yet: and I do not think Kate's prejudices against you will be found very difficult to overcome."

"It was she who first made me feel the beauty of real religion," continued Marco. "In Isabel I had admired its influence; but Kate taught me to love it. It was from the unaffected simplicity of some of her remarks, which yet showed so much deep and earnest piety, that I was led to think there must be something in the religion which she professed that I had never discovered. She ought not to refuse to cheer me on the way which she was the first to point out to me."

"You need not despair, I guess," replied Reginald. "I am not in my little Katie's confidence; and, as I said before, you must ask her all these momentous questions yourself. But just now everything seems to me so bright and hopeful, that I feel as if no further disappointment can be in store for either of us. Courage, Marco! We shall soon know our fate. Yonder comes the pastor; and we must tell him that we can no longer enjoy his hospitality among these wild crags and lonely retreats. We are impelled to return to the luxuriance and beauty of *Firenze la bella,* where we shall gladly welcome him as soon as he can follow us."

The next day saw the cousins on their way towards Italy: much to the satisfaction of Herbert, whose taste for mountain scenery had long been more than satisfied, and who greatly preferred the excitement and variety to be met with in a foreign city. Indeed, we are obliged to confess that none of the three travellers took any very special notice of the magnificent scenery through which they passed as they descended to the rich plains of Italy. Their general impression was one of beauty, and sunshine, and happiness; but either their conversation or their private reflections were so engrossing, as to leave them little leisure to observe the details of crag or precipice, stream or waterfall.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"ISABEL, I hear the footsteps of Reginald Aubrey;" exclaimed Juana, as she sprang up from the grass on which she was lying at her sister's feet, one afternoon, in their gay and fragrant garden. "Come, Isabel, come and meet him. I know you will be glad to see him, and he will tell us something of our dear Marco." And she caught her sister's hand, and tried to draw her away.

"Hush, darling," she replied. "Your ears are very quick, but they deceive you now. It can only be Francesco."

And Isabel sat still: but if Juana had been blessed with sight as well as hearing, she would have seen that her sister's face was suffused with a burning flush, and that her whole frame trembled with excitement.

Juana loosed her hand, and raising her own finger, she stood an instant in the attitude of intense listening.

"It is Reginald," she cried again; "and he is not alone. Oh, Isabel, can it be Marco coming with him? It is; it is! I hear their voices."

And rapidly and steadily the blind child took the path that led towards the house, leaving her sister overwhelmed with feelings which she vainly strove to conquer.

She had not much time for the effort. Before Juana had turned into the shrubbery path, Reginald and Marco appeared. The latter caught up the child in his arms, and kissed her with fond affection; while the former hastened on, and took Isabel's hand, which was extended tremblingly to greet him. To hide the confusion and agitation which this sudden meeting had occasioned, she immediately sprang forward to meet Marco; and while Reginald felt inclined to envy him the warm welcome he received, he could not but feel convinced that the very eagerness with which she so openly showed her joy, was the best proof that no warmer sentiment than friendship gave rise to it.

Marco made rapid and anxious inquiries respecting his mother, which Isabel was able to answer satisfactorily. She had suffered much from the suspense in which his continued silence had kept her; but the knowledge that his life had been spared, and the conviction that ere long he would give her some more certain tidings, had supported her. At Marco's request, Isabel went to prepare the Signora for the great joy that awaited her. Her son had refrained from going himself to her apartment, fearing that the suddenness of his unexpected appearance might overpower her;

and her adopted daughter was glad to hurry away that she might recover her composure before she again met the penetrating eyes of the young Englishman.

We need not describe the joy and thankfulness with which Signora Griffi welcomed her beloved son, after so long and painful a separation. One hour of happy converse with him—during which she scarcely once took her eyes off his handsome face, that now glowed with hope and pleasure—seemed to remove all the deep furrows that sorrow and anxiety had imprinted on her countenance during the last few months. Isidora Griffi again was beautiful, as she gazed lovingly at her son, or raised her still magnificent Venetian eyes to heaven, in fervent thanksgivings for his preservation.

Meanwhile Reginald had much to say to Isabel, who now listened to him with a calmer pleasure, and replied with her usual dignified composure of manner. He began again to fear that the agitation she had betrayed when he met her in the garden had all been occasioned by her surprise and joy at seeing Marco; but that fear gradually faded away, and gave place to a very joyful hope. Juana, too, as she leant on her sister's knee, and raised her sightless eyes, as if to see and smile at the welcome guest, expressed with so much *naïveté* the pleasure that she and Isabel felt at his return, that he could not but flatter himself that the intelligent child had some good reason for believing that his absence had been a source of regret.

Isabel, however, immediately checked the eloquent flow of Juana's discourse on that subject, and spoke of the pleasure she felt at the prospect of so soon seeing Ethel and Kate again. Truth compels us to record that hitherto Reginald had scarcely thought of his sisters, or even of his respected parents, since he came in sight of the Villa Anzilotti. He had, very undutifully, accompanied his cousin thither, without even proceeding to the house where his family intended to reside during their stay at Florence; and therefore, he still remained ignorant whether they had arrived or not. He now heard with pleasure that they had performed their journey very successfully, and had reached the beautiful city late on the previous evening. This fact was all that Isabel could tell; for it was all that a hasty note from Mrs. Aubrey had commuuicated to Signora Griffi. She had added, however, that she and all the party would drive out to the villa in the afternoon, and spend the evening there; and Isabel suggested, with a very slight blush, that Reginald should remain and meet them there, that they might all enjoy the pleasure of their surprise. Of course, no objection was urged to this arrangement; and so occupied was Marco in recounting to his mother all that had befallen him since last they parted, that he found no time to pay any attention to his adopted sister, and she was obliged to be contented with the society of the Englishman.

In due time the Aubreys appeared, and found the party at the villa engaged very much as we have described above. Certainly it was very natural that Marco should devote himself chiefly to his mother at such a moment; but Kate wondered to see her brother, her resolute, self-denying brother, again so captivated by the charms of Isabel Anzilotti, as to appear totally absorbed by her conversation, and totally forgetful of her engagement to his cousin: and she wondered also that Isabel should seem so indifferent to the fact that Marco scarcely noticed her during the whole evening, and that he exhibited no jealous uneasiness at Reginald's marked attentions; and still more, that he left his mother's side soon after their arrival, and had neither eyes nor ears for any one but herself.

She was disposed to be angry with him, and with Reginald, and with Isabel; and for some time her gravity and taciturnity greatly disconcerted Marco. But as the evening wore away, so did her displeasure and reserve. There was an atmosphere of happiness pervading the villa that communicated itself to every heart; and a private conference which Mrs. Aubrey held with her sister-in-law after dinner, had the effect of removing a certain anxious expression from her countenance, and making her look very benignly on Marco, as he sat by Kate, and conversed with her with all his natural animation.

Ethel seemed quite contented with talking to her

little favourite, Juana, and telling her of all their adventures in Switzerland, and of poor Janet's unfortunate accident, which had doubtless accelerated her fatal illness and death; and the child leant against her, as she was in the habit of doing with her sister or her *Madre Isidora*, and held her hand in both her own, and gently felt it over with her small fingers, while her eyes were lifted up as if fixed on the lips from whence the pleasant words proceeded, and her long shining hair fell back on her neck and shoulders.

"You are like my mother, my dear, beautiful mother;" she said softly, once, when Ethel paused in her narrative. "I am sure you are like her; for your voice goes to my heart as hers did, and it has never sounded strange to me. Let me feel your face, too, and then I shall know more certainly that you are like my own *Madre*." And as Ethel kindly bent down in compliance with her request, the child passed her hands slowly over her features, and smiled a happy smile.

"Yes," she continued, "it is the same—very much the same; and I love you, *cara Signorina*. It will grieve me when you go back to England, and I never see you any more: you know I call it *seeing* you, when I hold your hand like this. Will you not come back to Italy again?"

"I hope I may some day, Juana," replied her friend. "I should be sorry to think I should never see your beautiful country again. But I hope I shall see you

before I return to Italy; for we intend to persuade my aunt Isidora to go to England with us: and Isabel and you will not remain behind, will you, *carina?*"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Juana, eagerly. "I should be delighted to go with you, if Isabel and the Signora go. Let me whisper something in your ear," she continued; and she drew Ethel down, and said, in a very low, confidential tone, "I am quite sure that Isabel will be glad to go too. She is very fond of you, and of your sister Kate; but I think I know who she likes best to talk to: that one whom she is now singing with so sweetly."

"I think you mistake the voices, Juana. She is not singing with Marco, but with my brother, Reginald," replied Ethel.

"I know, I know; I never mistake voices," whispered the little girl. "Isabel likes better to sing with your brother, Reginald, than even with our brother, Marco. But you must not tell her that I said so. She did not tell it to me, but I found it out; and I can hear that her voice sounds richer and sweeter when Signor Reginald takes Marco's part."

This was rather an astounding communication to Ethel. It seemed that all the party had been at cross purposes; but decidedly appearances at present were such as to indicate that all mysteries and mistakes would soon be cleared up.

Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey and their daughters had

arranged to walk back to Florence from the Villa Anzilotti. A full moon, and the pleasure of taking exercise in the cool fresh evening air, had tempted them to send away their carriage; and they set out on their walk, accompanied by Reginald and Marco.

Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey led the way; Reginald had a great deal to say to Ethel; and so it came to pass, that Marco took charge of his cousin Kate. For some little time they walked on in silence, and then Marco said, rather abruptly,

"Kate, how do you like Isabel Anzilotti, as you see more of her? Do you think she improves on acquaintance?"

"I have often told you how much I admire her, Marco; and I think she looked more beautiful this evening than I have ever seen her do before."

"She was very lively this evening," observed Marco. "She is not generally so gay and animated."

"I am not surprised that she should be cheerful to-day," said Kate. "All the anxiety which she and your mother, and little Juana too, have been suffering on your account is over. She could not but be happy."

"Yes, she did seem particularly happy; and you do not know, Kate, how much it rejoiced me to see it."

"I suppose I could guess, though;" answered Kate, in as pleasant a tone as she could command.

"Oh, no doubt you could; though I have never told you anything on the subject. But, Kate, I want now

to ask you a favour. I find from Reginald that your parents have kindly arranged to remain at Florence for my wedding. Will you be Isabel's bridesmaid?"

Marco would hardly have put this query, if he had known the pang that it would cause poor Kate. Happily, a cloud was passing over the moon's bright face, and even Marco's eager eye could not discern the deep flush that rose to his cousin's countenance, or the deadly paleness that quickly succeeded it. She managed, however, to command her voice sufficiently to reply rather coldly,—

"Of course I will, if you and Isabel wish it."

"Why do you speak so indifferently, Kate? Why do not you seem to take more interest in what so nearly concerns me?" said Marco, very earnestly. Then, as she made no reply, he continued, "Tell me, Kate, tell me truly, have you any feeling against my marriage with Isabel? Oh, let me ask you, would it be painful to you to witness it?"

Kate had been leaning on her cousin's arm; but she now withdrew her hand, and her figure was drawn up to its fullest height. Her dignity was offended, and her feelings were severely wounded, and she replied in a tone that Marco had never heard before.

"How can you presume to ask me such a question, Marco?"

"Because, my beloved Kate, the whole happiness of my future life depends upon your reply. If I could

dare to believe that the idea of my marrying Isabel had been a source of disquietude to you, and that my declaration that I have never even thought of such a marriage could now give you any satisfaction, I should be the happiest man on earth. Katie, is it so?"

"You are not engaged to Isabel? Marco, you are mocking me! Why are you so cruel? What have I done that you should presume to speak thus to me?" And bitter tears of shame and vexation ran down her now averted face.

Marco caught her hand, and held it firmly in his own, while he replied,—

"You have done nothing, and said nothing, but what has raised you higher in my esteem, and made me love you more. Dearest Kate, I am not betrothed to Isabel. I love you, and you only. I have loved you ever since the first day that I saw you. I had no hope while I was only poor Marco Griffi, your drawing-master; and it was despair that partly drove me so hastily into that unfortunate insurrection. But may I entertain any hope now, as your cousin, Marco Aubrey?"

The hand which Marco held trembled in his; but it was not now withdrawn, though Kate's face was still turned away, as if she were deeply engaged in watching the silver moon emerge from her temporary eclipse. What reply she might eventually have made to her cousin's very direct question can never be known, for at

that moment they turned a corner in the road, and came up to the rest of the party, who had paused to listen to a sound which had not reached the ears, or at least, the attention, of Marco and Kate.

It was midnight; and the heavy bell of a convent that lay at the foot of the hill they were descending, was slowly sounding the hour. Twelve times it smote solemnly on the ear, and each stroke was repeated more faintly by a distant echo, which softly died away. Then, faint and low and sweet, arose the midnight hymn to the Virgin; and the voices of the imprisoned sisterhood who chanted it in such harmony, came up, oh! so gently, and with such a sad and touching cadence! Gradually it rose to a magnificent swell, and was mingled with the rich deep tones of an organ; and it again faded away to a plaintive dying sound. It seemed like fairy music; and the Aubreys stood listening as if entranced, scarcely daring to breathe, lest they should lose one of those sweet notes.

In Kate's mind arose a thought of the contrast of her present happy feelings with those of many of the inmates of that prison-house. "O God!" she inwardly exclaimed, "Thou, and Thou alone, knowest how much of agony, how much of blighted affection, how much of dark despair, dwells in the hearts from which those thrilling tones are sent up; and Thou canst pity the error of their blind and mistaken piety, which has cut them off from the love and the sympathy of their

fellow-creatures! I thank Thee that such is not my fate!"

While she thus mused, the current of her thoughts was very suddenly broken in upon by the lively notes of a quick march, played by fifes and drums and bugles; and a detachment of soldiers marched by, on their way to relieve the guard at a neighbouring gate of the city. It was a strange contrast, and dissipated at once the various trains of meditation into which all the party had wandered.

"That convent," said Marco, "was the one into which Father Bernardo had almost succeeded in persuading my poor dear mother to enter. Thank God, she was saved from such a fatal step!"

The Aubreys soon reached their place of abode, and there Marco left them, and returned to the villa; and it is observable, that as the light of the lamp, which stood near the door, fell on his countenance and that of Kate, their friends perceived that any sadness they might have felt while listening to the *Messe de Minuit* had already passed away, and that it was succeeded by a very bright expression of happiness.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FEW days after the circumstances just related had occurred, Mr. Aubrey was called down stairs to speak to an old woman; who, Herbert said, appeared much agitated, and very anxious to see him without delay. He found a very decrepit and miserable-looking woman, who, from infirmity and grief, seemed hardly able to stand. He gave her a seat, and kindly encouraged her to tell her errand; and, after a little time, she said,—

"My brother is dying, and he has sent me to you, to beg that you will go and see him immediately, as he has something which he wishes to say to you before he dies." And the old woman wept bitterly.

"Who is your brother, my good woman, and what can he want to say to a stranger like me?"

"His name is Giacomo Diodati," sobbed the woman.

"I never heard that name," said Mr. Aubrey; "I think you must be mistaken in coming to me."

"No, no, Signor, I am not mistaken; Giacomo bade me come to this house, and ask for Signor Aubrey; and if you were from home, I was to inquire for your son,

Signor Reginald. But I remember now that you cannot know my brother by that name. Do you know him as Father Bernardo?"

"I have heard of Father Bernardo, and I have also seen him. I intended to seek him this very day, on the part of my sister-in-law, Signora Griffi. I will gladly accompany you. But where is your brother? Is he not in the monastery of Santa Maria Novella?"

"Giacomo is at my poor dwelling, and I thank the Blessed Virgin who brought him there to die. Otherwise I could not have been with him to nurse him, and to receive his latest breath. My good dear brother! He has long been my only friend, and when he is gone, I shall have nothing left to do but to pray for his soul at Santa Maria's altar, and then to lie down and die also."

This was said as the old woman tottered along by Mr. Aubrey's side; and then she went on muttering *Ave Marias*, and calling on her favourite saints to have pity on her brother's soul, and intercede for the pardon of his sins.

To put a stop to what it was painful to him to hear, and hopeless to argue against, Mr. Aubrey again led the poor woman to speak of her brother; and he learnt from her that they were born of poor parents, and that Giacomo had embraced a monastic life, and had, by his talents, and his exemplary piety, risen to great eminence in the Dominican convent. She said that she

had remained unmarried, and very poor, and that latterly she had become so infirm as to be unable to do anything towards her own support.

"But," she added, "Giacomo has never let me know what it was to want. He has paid the rent of my house, and supplied me with every necessary. And, what has been more to me than food or clothing, he has come twice every week to see me, and to let me hear his kind voice. He has never despised me because I am poor and ignorant, and he is powerful and learned. He has never forgotten that he is my brother, and that he and I are alone in the world."

"How true it is," thought Mr. Aubrey; "that no one is altogether evil, as surely as no one is altogether good. It was not in Father Bernardo that I expected to discover such traits of kindness." Then he said to the old woman,—

"What is the nature of your brother's illness? Is there no hope of his recovery?"

"Alas! alas! no hope," she replied. "He came to see me this morning as usual, and he looked ill and weary. But he was as kind as ever. He was praying with me, when suddenly the book fell from his hand, his eyes closed, and he sank on the ground. The neighbours called in a medical man, and also summoned some of his brethren from the monastery, and they told me it was paralysis. For some hours he could not speak; but when his speech returned, the first words he

uttered were your name, and a request that I would seek you. They say he cannot live till night, and the last sacraments of the church will be performed for him at the hour of vespers. Let us make speed, or we may be too late."

And old Madelina seemed to gain fresh strength from the apprehension, and hurried on in silence till she reached her own door.

The house was small, and mean in its outward appearance; but the inside was scrupulously neat. It consisted of two little chambers, in the inner of which lay Father Bernardo, extended on a bed, and evidently sinking rapidly. At the entrance of his sister and Mr. Aubrey he seemed to revive, and intelligence returned to his glazing eye. In a low, and rather inarticulate voice, he said,—

"You have done well, Madelina. Now leave us for awhile."

As soon as she had retired to the outer room, and closed the door, he continued,—

"I have no time to lose. I have injured your sister, Signora Griffi, and I wish to make all the reparation in my power."

"You held back her son's letter, which he entrusted to you at Milan," replied Mr. Aubrey; "and thus kept her in fear and anxiety. But Marco has returned to her now, and all is well. I intended to seek you to-day, and to demand a restitution of that letter."

"I have more than that one, Signor. In that old cabinet you will find a sealed packet. It contains all the letters that Signora Griffi and her son have written to each other since his trial at Milan, and also those which you wrote to her from Geneva, and some which she addressed to you. How I obtained possession of them, it is not necessary to explain. I wished to compel the Signora to enter a convent. I had my reasons, and they were good ones. Suffice it to say, I failed in my object; and, before I leave the world, I wish to restore those letters. My breath is failing, and my brain gets confused; but I have more to say. Listen to me, Signor Aubrey, leave this city as soon as possible. Do not despise my warning; and, above all, look well to the safety of your youngest daughter. I once wished her evil, and tried to accomplish it; because I discovered that Marco Griffi loved her, and I knew she strengthened him in his heretical and republican opinions. But I have heard that she is good and charitable. She and her sister have several times relieved the poor in this city, and once they gave liberally to my sister, whom they met in their walk, and saw was infirm and suffering. For the sake of that act of mercy to the only human being whom I love, I have laid aside my purpose, and on my death-bed I ask her pardon and yours. Will you grant it?—and will you follow my friendly counsel?—for there are others who seek Griffi's ruin, and who desire your daughter's also."

"I will do both," replied Mr. Aubrey, taking the cold hand of Father Bernardo in his; "and I thank God, who has put it into your heart to make this reparation, and has given you strength to perform it."

"*Pax vobiscum*," said the monk. And he clasped his hands across his breast, and closed his eyes. Mr. Aubrey took the packet of letters from the place which Giacomo had pointed out; and then he stood for some time gazing at the form before him, which, but for the motion of the lips in silent prayer, might have seemed that of a corpse. Presently the monk opened his eyes, and looked anxiously around, and murmured the name of Madelina.

Mr. Aubrey immediately summoned her from the other room, for he saw that her brother's vital powers were exhausted, and that he could not live till sun-set.

Madelina hastened with trembling steps to her brother's side, and she saw the change, and knew that all would soon be over.

"Oh, send for the priests!" she cried. "Let not my Giacomo's soul depart without the rites of the church;" and kneeling down, she leant upon the low bed, and began to mutter prayers, mingled with sobs and lamentations. Mr. Aubrey also knelt, and he uttered a simple prayer, which reached the ears of the dying man, though they were rapidly becoming insensible to every earthly sound. He gave one look of intelligence to the English gentleman, and he uttered the words,—

"Good Madelina, farewell. Pray for me!"

He did not speak again; and silence ensued,—the silence of death,—for poor Madelina neither wept nor stirred.

By-and-by the outer door was heard to open, and then the door of the chamber was struck. Mr. Aubrey opened it, and two of the dead man's Dominican brethren entered, bearing all the requisites for performing the last ceremonies for the departing soul.

They did not at first perceive that they were too late, and they called twice on their brother Bernardo, thinking that he slept. It was of no avail: a louder call had summoned Bernardo, and had been obeyed; and he would awake no more in this world. Then Madelina's grief broke forth; and she called loudly on him who could no longer hear even *her* voice, to which he had ever kindly listened.

Mr. Aubrey could no longer be of any use, and he prepared to depart. But he did not leave the desolate Madelina, until he had made her understand that she should be provided for as long as she lived: which promise he liberally performed before he left Florence.

* * * * *

It was a November day; but not a dull and foggy one. A soft light was on the trees and on the hills, and a gentle breeze stirred the fading leaves that still lingered on their branches, and made many of them fall with a pleasant rustling sound.

Wreaths of evergreens, enlivened with a few autumnal flowers, formed arches over every gate that led to Altringham Hall; but no entrance was so magnificently decorated as that which Rebecca Fowler considered her own, and where she stood in holiday garb, and snowy cap and apron, as if awaiting some arrival. The road that led through the park to the Hall was strewed with leaves and flowers, and the house was adorned with flags and garlands, all indicative of some festive occasion.

On the steps stood Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey and Signora Griffi; and Ethel was moving about among the groups of tenants and dependents and school children, who were standing on the gravel sweep, while she held the blind, but happy and smiling, Juana by the hand; and was closely followed by the faithful Viking.

A distant sound of wheels was heard, and two carriages, drawn by four horses, rapidly approached the great entrance-gate. Old Rebecca did not now hide herself in the lodge, and look out of "*the little side window.*" No: she stood at the gate; and, as the first carriage paused, she rushed up to the open window, and caught hold of Kate's extended hand, exclaiming,—

"The blessing of the Lord be upon you, my dear Miss Kate,—I mean, Mrs. Marcus Aubrey,—and upon your honourable husband, and all your honourable house!" And so excited was the old woman at the

sight of the bride, that she scarcely noticed her daughter Ruth, who was kissing her hand to her from the rumble of the carriage.

Kate and Marco smiled, and kindly returned her salutations, and those of the crowd that lined the road. Then the carriage drove on, and was followed by another, in which sat Reginald Aubrey,—now the picture of health and happiness,—and by his side a very beautiful lady, whose raven hair, and sparkling black eyes, told of a foreign origin.

Again old Rebecca approached, as the spokeswoman of the crowd, and offered her congratulations, and implored blessings on the young couple; and then, quite overcome by her feelings, she put her white apron to her eyes and sobbed out in the ears of Mrs. Goodwin a great deal about the union of the two branches of the honourable house, and the happiness to be anticipated therefrom.

Meanwhile the carriages rolled on towards the house; and the moment they were visible from the door, such a true English shout was raised, as made the welkin ring, and was echoed again and again from the hills around.

Warm and cordial was the greeting which took place between the two newly-married couples, who were now returning from their respective wedding-tours, and their assembled relatives: and, when the excitement had a little subsided, Mr. Aubrey led his nephew and his

daughter to the front of the steps, and introduced them to the tenants and peasantry as the future master and mistress of Altringham Hall.

With a happy smile, that showed the sincerity of the declaration, he said,—

"I have never considered myself as anything more than the steward of this estate, and have hoped to restore it to the rightful owner. My brother Marcus is no more; but I have the truest happiness in resigning it into the hands of his son, who is now my son also."

THE END.

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